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PORTGAGE ON THE BRAIN



VINCENT
HARPER

1. Fiction, English

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**THE
MORTGAGE ON THE BRAIN**

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"She thought and felt and dreamed of many things—the deep
and mystical things."

(See page 176.)

The Mortgage on the Brain

Being the Confessions of the late
Ethelbert Croft, M. D.

BY
VINCENT HARPER

Illustrated by
CHARLES RAYMOND MACAULEY

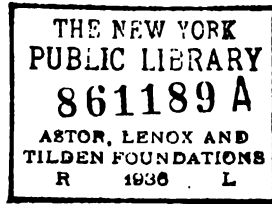


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1905

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FOREWORD

SIGNS are not wanting, that when speculative Science formulates its next hypothesis respecting life, very little will remain of what was formerly looked upon as the exclusive field of the metaphysician and the theologian. Recent revolutionising discoveries having to do with the functions and attributes of matter are fast bridging the chasm between psychology and physics. In the light of what is already known about "vibrations" and "radio-activity" and the "N.-rays," many of the "facts" of Science and the "truths" of Theology have come to grief. It is, of course, too soon to forecast the outcome, but anyone at all conversant with what is doing in the laboratory, or who takes note of current thought among metaphysical writers, can hardly fail to see which way the straws point. "Mind" and "thought" and "spirit" are now being tossed into the melting pot of fearless analysis, quite as freely as those other time-honoured "basic facts"—ether, force, and our useful old friend the atom. Out of it all is slowly but surely emerging the idea that ignorance and superstition long ago forged a Mortgage on the Brain of man, which it is high time to repudiate before the bar of reason.

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THE PEOPLE

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DR. YZNAGA, a genius who disputes the Mortgage.

LADY TORBETH, a problem to her friends.

DEAN CHELMSFORD, Lady Torbeth's father.

MURIEL ERRINGTON, a victim of circumstances.

GERTRUDE LEIGHTON, an innocent transgressor.

EDWARD TEMPLETON, an idealist in love with Miss
Leighton.

VISCOUNT TORBETH, a man who faces the facts.

LORD ACKERBY, a man who succumbs to the facts.

MISS EUNICE CROFT, a spinster with a reverence for
public opinion.

FREYCINET, a hypnotic humourist and philosopher.

MRS. DENISTON, a beneficent force in society.

TROUTWEIN, a Britisher content with things as they
are.

TREDWELL, a painter who knows the world.

etc., etc., etc.

The action takes place in London, Paris, and Dresden.

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**THE
MORTGAGE ON THE BRAIN**



THE MORTGAGE ON THE BRAIN

CHAPTER I

“**G**UILTY!” As the ’bus rumbled through Fleet Street I saw the sandwich men swarming out of the newspaper offices, each man bearing on his back and breast, in red and blue and black and yellow, the flaring proclamation. I could not read the lower lines in smaller type, but of course I knew who it was that had been found guilty. The long and thrilling trial of Bishop Forbes had evidently come to an end at last, and once more truth had been crucified upon the cross of prejudice.

When the ’bus stopped at the foot of Ludgate Hill I bought a paper. Lurid headlines showed that my conjecture was correct. The most sensational trial in a generation had ended that afternoon. The twelve good men and true had not failed the England that expects every man to do his duty. They had proved themselves to be, if not very profound metaphysicians, at all events good, solid, wrong-headed, reliably bigoted Britishers—and the clergy and the country consequently breathed freely again. And, it must be confessed, it was a relief to have an end of the hysterics which had

convulsed the country during the interminable progress of the famous case.

In summing up, counsel for the bishop had advanced the staggering defence, that while it was true that Bishop Forbes and Morley the stock-jobber lived and moved and had their being in one and the same body, it had been clearly brought out in the testimony of the medical experts that each of these two "personalities" was absolutely distinct from the other, and that, therefore, as each was a perfectly independent will, the bishop—the one charged with the crime—could not be held to account for the stock-jobber's offence. Naturally enough, this "preposterous" claim threw the country into a state of nerves, the press vying with the pulpit in its haste to denounce the dangerous, not to say damnable, sophistry.

"Were the bishop's blasphemous plea to be recognised," shrieked the pulpit, "moral responsibility were at an end." "At this rate," thundered a leader in the *Times* newspaper, "any clever scoundrel can count upon getting off scot-free, by merely pleading that his 'wicked partner,' his mythical 'other self,' was the guilty party!"

But the conscientious scruples of the clergy and the smug common sense of the press suffered no violence, for the jury promptly found the bishop guilty of the stock-jobber's crime. The pious duly rejoiced over the undoing of this one sinner, who impiously asserted that he needed no repentance; the great British public dined

heartily that night on the "double life" of the unfrocked bishop; and the salacious revelations of the trial noticeably increased the attendance and the interest at every parish sewing society for some time.

The effect of the verdict upon me was to finally determine me to set to work without another day's delay to prepare these Confessions for publication immediately after my death.

If I have delayed writing my incredible story until the critical state of my health forced me to realise that I must do so now or never, it has not been because the idea did not occur to me, nor from any lack of urgent entreaty by others. On the contrary, almost my first thought on regaining my reason—if I may so far countenance popular ignorance, as to admit that "I" ever really lost "my" reason—was to write an exhaustive report of the experiences which, unlike any previous show of ability on my part, caused my name to be known throughout the scientific world no less than by the entire public reached by the Associated Press. Nor did my intention to publish the history of my case spring from the least desire to advertise myself or to seize the opportunity offered by my singular, my awful ordeal, to achieve the vulgar flash in the pan of cheap notoriety with its usual harvest of cash. No. If I learned nothing more from my old mentor, Steinmetz, of Vienna, I learned that he who would truly know must be reticent, and he who would get a lasting hearing, must be slow to speak. My sole object, therefore, was to preserve a

true record of the phenomena, as I alone knew them to have occurred; to bequeath to Science the simple but correct and detailed data for future possible revolutionising developments in the field of physico-psychology. The fate of Bishop Forbes made it my duty to speak.

Then, too, pressure of a kind which I found embarrassing to resist was brought to bear upon me by several learned societies and some of the men foremost in the world of science. Personal friends also urged me to give my story to the world, while others of whom I had never heard, and who acted for widely differing and not always very cogent reasons, joined in the general demand. Some of these latter amused me. Clergymen—possibly having in mind Job's delicious bit of irony, "Oh, that mine enemy would write a book!"—implored me to set forth an account of experiences which, if they prove anything, prove that the very foundation principles of the present orthodox teaching with respect to moral responsibility are utterly false. My worthy clerical correspondents, with quite refreshing innocence, begged me to give the public facts which, if pressed to their logical end, must result in the absolute annihilation of the commonly accepted notions as to "personality" and, in fact, as to man's whole being. But, I suppose, so one have piety, it is perhaps too much to expect that one also have a sense of humour or the logical faculty.

Lecture bureaus made me truly tempting offers, and

editors submitted dazzling propositions in which fame and royalties were as assured and as immense as one could well wish them to be. And finally, anxious, sin-laden, sorely tried creatures, mostly women, implored me to show them the "way out" to the wondrous land from whose bourne I only had ever returned. Altogether, then, the idea suggested itself and was suggested by many others often and insistently enough to have prompted me to act; but for several and, I feel, sufficient reasons, I have delayed doing so until now.

First of all, I felt bound by every consideration of decency and honour to remain silent so long as any utterance of mine might reflect upon or annoy the remarkable woman whose destiny was so bound up in my own, and whose experiences in connection with our wanderings amid the shadows were so seemingly compromising that for me to publish her story would be to do violence to the most sacred confidence as well as to subject her to almost certain defamation. With the lapse of time, however, both she and her noble husband have come to think that it is my duty to declare the whole truth of the matter—doubtless the best course in the long run; and I write now under the express permission and at the written request of both of them. It will be seen by those cognisant of the facts that I make use throughout this story, of fictitious names—except, of course, in the case of the eminent men of science—and I think it only fair to my readers to point out this fact.

Another restraining influence keeping me from pub-

lishing my story was my regard for the unique old genius who made the story possible. As long as Doctor Yznaga lived, I very properly hesitated to throw the limelight of publicity upon the retirement which he valued more than all else in life. Much that is vital to this narrative could not have been printed without deeply wounding him—a singularly susceptible and chivalrous man who loved often to quote Cardinal Newman's definition of a gentleman: "one who never inflicts pain." I could not bring myself to so much as think of ignoring his constant request to be suffered to end his days in peace forgotten by the world. He has now passed away, however.

Again, while I had the right to hope that I myself would live for any length of time, I naturally dreaded the storm of brutal derision which is certain to break upon this revelation which, since its verity cannot be successfully questioned nor its facts explained away, may be met only with that handiest weapon of clerical and popular "argument"—ridicule. Far from desiring to preach a new religion or to exploit a novel philosophy of life, I contented myself with the intention to write at some time, succinctly and in a scientific way, without comment, the facts as I know them, and to leave this treatise in the hands of Wolff of Heidelberg or de Moulin of Paris, the noted specialists in alienation, to be published after my death.

Lastly, I had also the very practical and (in its outcome) amusing reason for delay which arose from my

incarceration in a madhouse, that ready way of disposing of me and of discrediting my statements having occurred to some of my reverend and other antagonists! Thanks to the sense of humour of the man in the street, however, and to the harmless if not positively beneficent character of my "hallucinations" as far as others were concerned, I was released at last from the asylum where a number of persons entertain more or less absurd opinions, and allowed to return to a world in which everybody entertains certain opinions, and they of the last importance, which are demonstrably, not absurd merely, but frightful, fatal!

In spite of our efforts to prevent a general and necessarily premature discussion of my experiences I soon began to see allusions to the subject in the press, and wherever I went I was assailed with questions whose absurdity showed what a distorted idea of the facts was being accepted by the public. Consequently, when a great publishing house asked me to write the story, free from scientific and technical terms, and intended solely to give the lay mind the facts in a straightforward way, the suggestion pleased me, and I resolved to write such a book—some day. Within the past year, however, the nervous disorder which has gradually undermined my constitution, has made such progress that I realise that almost before I can hope to correct the proofs of this present popular statement of my strange case I shall have passed to where beyond these voices there is peace. The story is, I am thankful to say, writ-

ten at last and only waiting for my death, to be placed on the market, when—in the interest of truth and as a means toward that ultimate solution of man's life-problem for which the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together until now—I hope that it may win a wide reading and find a crevice here and there in the walls of preconception through which its truths may penetrate to at least a few of earth's cheated and fettered ones.

For a scientific presentation of the facts, accordingly, I refer the curious learned to my work which Professor Wolff will bring out at Heidelberg. They who are curious without being also learned may, if they choose, read this present perfectly simple and candid story which without further preface I now begin.

CHAPTER II

THE night of June 4, 19—, is likely to remain a memorable one in the annals of the stage. There was a gala performance of the *Merchant of Venice* at the Three Feathers theatre, where a brilliant audience, including their Majesties, the king and queen, and other royalty had gathered to witness Sir Arkell Mostyn's revival of his matchless *Shylock*.

Esteemed the greatest living of tragedians, and beyond question the greatest "Jew" in the history of the drama, Sir Arkell had happily acceded to the request of a number of influential persons who realised that his acting days could not in the nature of things be many more, and essayed the rôle which had made him famous forty years ago and which he had not played for a score of years. The rush for places was enormous immediately the announcement was made, and when it became known that the Court was to grace the occasion, society was so anxious to be present that the tickets already sold went to a fabulous premium.

I had luckily obtained an excellent place in the sixth row of stalls, and although Lord Torbeth offered me ten guineas for it, and just at that time guineas were by no means to be despised—I had only recently bought an expensive West End practise in London where I was

quite unknown—I heroically resisted the temptation, with perhaps the penalty of incurring his lordship's displeasure. On the great night, therefore, I was one of the fortunate ones who saw, not Sir Arkell's last *Shylock* alone, but his last performance in any rôle.

I make no pretence to being a dramatic critic, but before the first act was half over I began to feel that all was not well with the great actor. His acting, it seemed to me, was irregular and at times positively feeble. There were, it is true, occasional flights to convincing greatness, the burst of impotent rage when *Shylock* discovered the trap into which the persuasive *Portia* had led him being simply terrific. But all through the evening I was conscious of a feeling of sympathy for Sir Arkell, and cherished the hope that I alone had detected the strain under which many portions of his lines were read. Now and again I even suspected that his reading was faulty to the extent of not being from the *Merchant of Venice* at all, fragments from *King Lear*, and others which I could not place at the moment seeming to force themselves to utterance from his lips. The ill-disguised nervousness of some of the other actors also heightened my anxiety.

But if my enjoyment of the play was thus marred by fears for the venerable actor, the house afforded me no end of amusement and pleasure after my fifteen years' absence from London. It may not be true that all Englishmen dearly love a lord, but I confess that I

thoroughly enjoyed this first opportunity of looking at my own British aristocracy again. There was positive delight in being able to stare as much as I pleased at the king and the great assemblage of world-famous men and beautiful women who sat so obligingly to be stared at in their boxes just above me.

It was while I was revelling in this feast of greatness during the first intermission that I gradually became aware of that peculiar feeling which notifies one that someone is riveting his attention and his eye upon one. The "influence" seemed to emanate from the lower box at the left of the stage, and after purposely refraining from turning for some moments—in order to test the persistency of the mental attraction—I finally did turn to ascertain who it might be that was focussing his mind upon me.

There was only one (visible) occupant of the box—an old gentleman, and he was not looking at me nor sitting in a position from which he could see me without completely turning around. I was a bit chagrined on finding that my "influence" was a wholly imaginary one, but as I looked at the old gentleman I quickly realised that, whoever he might be, he was beyond all doubt *the* great man of that gathering of great ones.

I instinctively felt that under his queer little skull-cap—for all the world like a cardinal's *suchetta*—lay the real kingship of genius, the true nobility of mind. He wore evening dress, but it was of a cut and fashion that announced the wearer a foreigner and a survival from

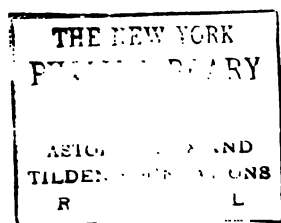
amulet set with magnificent emeralds. I *had*, then, been looked at fixedly as I supposed, and by a woman. Flattered by finding that one of my theories had been strikingly corroborated, and possibly also by finding that I had for certainly five minutes formed the subject of this woman's attention, I pulled myself together and forced myself to take note of what was passing on the stage.

Suddenly, however, I began to grow conscious that the mental influence was once more drawing me toward the old Spaniard's box, and after again resisting the impulse to turn until I had satisfied myself that I was really being gazed at, I brought my head about abruptly and looked. She was staring straight at me, but instantly withdrew her head behind the curtain when she saw me turn, and I was, therefore, able to get only a momentary glimpse of her face. She was a woman of about thirty, and the queenly pose of her head as well as the superb curve of her neck and chin bespoke her an aristocrat; of her features or her expression I could, alas, form not even the vaguest idea, so quick had been her retreat. But I continued to think of her and to watch that gleaming arm with its Oriental manacle studded with emeralds, ever hoping that she might forget herself and come out from behind the curtains.

Not another glimpse did I get, however, and it was with relief that I heard poor Sir Arkell read his last lines at the end of the scene. I joined in the tremendous



"As I glanced up I saw the gleam of a woman's bare arm and shoulder."



ovation offered to him as he made his final exit. Everyone in the house—perhaps not royalty whom I forgot to watch—stood and waved handkerchiefs and shouted “bravo!” to the haggard and bowed man who came no less than seven times before the curtain to bow his thanks.

Finally mercy was shown him, and Sir Arkell was suffered to retire to the green-room. The orchestra at once did what it could to destroy the illusion of the play by striking up some rudely irrelevant strain, and I was about to leave the theatre—the garden scene at Belmont never did attract me anyhow—when the music suddenly stopped as the manager came before the curtain and asked the attention of the distinguished audience for a moment. There was silence instantly, and the manager said, “If there is a medical gentleman present, Sir Arkell Mostyn would be obliged if he would come at once into the green-room.”

A murmur of apprehension ran through the house, and I looked quickly about in the hope that some physician of known standing might appear, thus sparing me the embarrassment of proclaiming my professional character in a place where no one had ever heard of me. Apparently no other medical man, eminent or otherwise, was present, for no one rose; so I stood up, after waiting a second or two more, and was about to move forward, when I heard a sonorous voice near me saying, “As no other man of science seems to respond, I humbly beg leave to proffer my services to Sir Arkell. Shall I come this——”

He stopped. It was my old friend in the box who was speaking—with a quaint Spanish accent, too!—and he had just caught sight of me.

“Ah, pardon me, sir,” he went on addressing me. “I now observe that Sir Arkell is so fortunate as to command your assistance and not my own. Proceed, sir.”

I fear that I went red. I know, at all events, that I stammered something and bowed to the old Spaniard that he was to act by all means. Meanwhile the audience was growing nervous, there was visible uneasiness in the royal box, and the distracted manager was losing all patience.

“Come, if you please, gentlemen—both of you—and look sharp about it, for God’s sake! This way, sir.”

He assisted the old doctor over the parapet of the box on to the stage, and they disappeared behind the curtain, while I hastened through the stage door. The next moment the manager returned to the anxiously waiting audience and made his melancholy announcement.

“Your Majesties, ladies and gentlemen, it is my sad duty to advise you that Sir Arkell Mostyn is no more. He died only a moment since, it is supposed, of heart disease.”

When the old doctor and I reached the green-room we found the great actor lying on a couch surrounded by the members of his company still in their Venetian costumes. Life was extinct.

"Since there is now nothing that we can do, alas," said the old Spaniard to me after we had satisfied ourselves that this was the case, "let us be going. I shall be honoured, sir, if you will call upon me. I have something to say about Sir Arkell's recent most extraordinary experiences which may interest you. Come, it is very late."

He gave me his card with much antique ceremony, and I returned him my own, addressing him now in Spanish which greatly pleased him, and we left the theatre by a side door. I accompanied him to his carriage, in the hope of catching a last glimpse of my lady of the emeralds; but, beyond hearing the rustle of silk and seeing a faint image of white in the recesses of the smart brougham into which the old man hastily shut himself, I was disappointed. The carriage drove rapidly away, and I strolled slowly along the brightly lighted streets, rather indefinitely intending to go and eat something somewhere. Suddenly I remembered that I had not looked at the old gentleman's card, and accordingly stopped in front of a shop window in order to do so. The name was:

"Pablo Maria Yznaga y Morales, M.D., Ph.D."

I started. At last I had met the man whose audacious work on the brain had staggered Europe and led to his summary expulsion from his chair at the University of Salamanca!

CHAPTER III

THE next morning I awoke to find myself famous or what came to the same thing, my Aunt Eunice thought, in the case of a young practitioner immersed in the bottomless sea of competition in London—I was being advertised and talked about.

“Well, Bertie, my dear, at last we have confessed that we are somebody, I see. Why, my dear fellow, you are famous! Just see what the paper says of you—but how very shocking, all this about poor Sir Arkell Mostyn, is it not?” said Aunt Eunice when I joined her in the morning-room where as usual she was reading the news while I kept her waiting for breakfast.

“It was indeed a shock to us all in the theatre last night,” I answered as she handed me the paper; “but surely my name does not appear in connection with the tragedy, does it? A newsy-looking chap asked me for my name at the door, I remember, but I of course refused to give it.”

“Of course you did! That goes without saying. A disciple of the only Steinmetz could not demean himself so low as to pick up a providential bit of good fortune like this of attending the man whose death will be talked of all over the world. Oh, dear me, no, of course

not! Only these vulgar London medical men stoop to advertising their ability! Ethelbert Croft, you are a goose! But thank goodness, somebody recognised you at the theatre last night—and now, sir, will you please look at this, and be duly grateful?"

"But, my dear Aunt, I was able to do absolutely nothing for poor Sir Arkell, you know," I protested as I held open the paper.

"Yes, and but for this merciful piece of good luck, you would not have been in the way of doing much for anybody, it seems to me! Ethelbert, it is positively sinful for you to bury your talent in the way you do, especially when goodness knows how many quacks are growing rich—yes, sir, and on this very street, too!" rattled on my aunt, never so happy as when berating me on whom she doted.

"Oh, but I say, do let me at least see what the paper has to say, won't you?" I laughed, and Aunt Eunice came over and stood looking down at me while I read.

Several columns were devoted to the brilliant career which had ended so tragically the night before, and at the end of the account of the memorable performance and of the melancholy scene enacted at its close, I was fairly taken aback on finding the following reference to myself:

"It is consoling to know that nothing which science could do for the august patient failed to be done, for within a few seconds of his fatal seizure Sir Arkell was attended by Doctor Ethelbert Croft who fortunately

was in the audience. It was too late, however, for anything effective to be done, as death ensued within two minutes. Although a comparatively recent comer to London, Doctor Croft—now of Gledoe Gardens, Kensington—is known among the medical fraternity on the Continent, as the author of a standard work on cerebral pathology, as well as the foremost pupil and recognised exponent of the great Steinmetz of Vienna under whom Doctor Croft worked for seven years. The learned gentleman declined to discuss the nature of Sir Arkell Mostyn's final ailment."

I laid the paper down, and stared at my aunt. This was incomprehensible. I had refused to give my name to the only one who asked it, and as far as I know, nobody in the theatre had ever seen me, still less heard of my labours under Steinmetz. And then, too, no mention was made of Doctor Yznaga who was a recognised authority before I was born, and who moreover intimated that he was familiar with Sir Arkell's recent illness of which I myself had not so much as heard. In no way could I account for this astonishing piece of newspaper enterprise, so I continued to stare dumb and perplexed at Aunt Eunice who stood beaming triumphantly down at me. After a moment the dear old girl stooped and kissed me, and then went off to hurry breakfast.

Sweet are the uses of advertisement! During that very day no less than six important cases were brought to me. Some of these proved to be just what I most

desired, since they offered problems in mental abnormality affording me excellent opportunity to apply the bold principles of Steinmetz, which my few medical acquaintances in London assured me were quite unknown in metropolitan practise. To only one of these new cases shall I now allude—not because it was the most unusual, for the case of the Chelsea barrister was, as an unique instance of reminiscent hallucination, far more perplexing and absorbing; but merely because of its vital relation to this story of my own subsequently developed case.

I was about to drive out on my rather limited afternoon round of professional calls, when a cab stopped at my door, and an elderly gentleman in gaiters and apron and shovel hat alighted and came up the steps. Presently the card of Doctor Chelmsford, the erudite Dean of Dunchester, was brought into my private office, and I hastened out to receive the very reverend gentleman whose arrival had been observed, I afterward learned, by Aunt Eunice with much pleasurable agitation, from an upper window.

The dean eyed me with frigid suspicion for a moment, in the fullest possible exercise of that condescending, if not insulting, superiority which would seem to be a privilege accompanying high ecclesiastical preferment. A fault in my character being a constitutional inability to show a proper deference to those in high places, I returned his very reverend stare calmly, and waited for him to speak.

"Ah—ah—Mr. Croft, I presume? I had expected to find a rather older man," said the dean.

I bowed.

"The fact is, Mr. Croft, that I have sought you at the instance of Sir Porter Hope—eminent man, Sir Porter."

I bowed again, and the dean was plainly growing uneasy.

"To be perfectly frank," he went on, "in the opinion of Sir Porter Hope, I could do no better than to place the case—the very serious, or I may properly say, the painfully distressing case of the Viscountess Torbeth, my most unhappy daughter, in your hands."

"Pray be seated, sir," I replied wondering what possible trouble might have overtaken the famous beauty, and amused at the coincidence of my having met the viscount only a few days before—with no very great prospect of having favourably impressed that nobleman, as I had refused to surrender my stall at the theatre for his ten guineas.

The dean sat down and looked nervously at the door as if he included my servants in his general policy of suspicion.

"We are quite private here I assure you, sir," I said with a trace of contempt, I fear; "and as Sir Porter was so good as to refer you to me, may I ask what seems to be the matter with the viscountess? You will, of course, appreciate the necessity to speak with absolute freedom and—truthfulness."

"Quite so," replied the dean, and I waited without rendering him any assistance in the way of leading questions.

"If you are quite sure that we shall be entirely private here, I shall state the extraordinary case as lucidly as I can."

I ignored this second piece of insufferable insolence, and the worthy man hitching his chair close to my own proceeded, speaking in a low, soft, pale-pink sort of voice, as if delivering a charge to the clergy.

"Lady Torbeth's general health has been—ah—ah—what I might describe as excellent, you know. Yes, I feel warranted in going to the length of saying that the health of Lady Torbeth has been—ah—ah—extraordinary—until quite recently. But after her return from India—the viscount went out on some business for the government two years ago, you know—my daughter has developed some most alarming symptoms which, as nearly as my personal observations can determine, would lead one to fear that her reason was—ah—ah—more or less affected, as it were. An ordinary case of mental aberration, while, of course, deplorable, could be treated by our eminent specialists in the usual way—and, I humbly trust, borne with proper Christian resignation by her ladyship's sorely afflicted parents. But, sir, I blush to have to advise you that her ladyship's case is very far from being an ordinary case of mental aberration, very far indeed."

The dean paused impressively, as at the end of a tell-

ing period in a sermon, and I forgot his unctuousness in my rapidly increasing interest in the "very far from ordinary" case of Lady Torbeth. Presently the pink purring began again.

"To be perfectly frank, sir—I am informed that I may trust you—in the undoubtedly able opinion of Sir Porter Hope and of several other eminent practitioners whom he has called into consultation, there is no mental lesion whatsoever; but—and you, sir, will, I trust, not consider me disloyal to the doctrinal standards of the Established Church when I admit this—there are certain most embarrassing and distressing indications that Lady Torbeth is—ah—ah—as it were—ah—ah—possessed!"

"Possessed of what?" I asked with cruel innocence when the dean again paused with an air of immense solemnity.

"I was about to go into that subject explicitly, sir," he replied, "and desire to state at the very outset, that I make use of the objectionable term merely for want of a better. We read, you know, that in the earlier dispensation and in the primitive church persons were at times the victims of demoniacal possession—their own personal will, as it were, being temporarily subject to the control of evil spirits. Well, sir, my most unfortunate daughter, the viscountess, has recently given indications of being similarly subject to some will or influence other than her proper own—which, I need scarcely tell you, sir, is the cause of the keenest distress to Mrs.

Chelmsford and myself, and a very grave embarrassment to me as a clergyman and dignitary of the Church of England, because in the doctrinal formularies of the Church as by Parliament established at the Reformation no mention is made of such possession. Owing to the corrupt practices of the Roman body I presume divine providence put a stop to the invasion of human souls by evil spirits, for, as you no doubt are aware, the practice of exorcising them led to the grossest superstition."

I wanted to laugh, but the good man's expression of decanal sorrow was saved from contempt by an added touch of genuine human sorrow which he either forgot or was not able to hide entirely. Moreover, the nature of Lady Torbeth's "possession"—whether countenanced by the standards of the Established Church or not—was precisely in the line of those investigations which, alas, I had too seldom an opportunity to make. So I reached over for my note book, and turned my face to the dean.

"What you say interests me deeply," I said, "and I shall devote my best abilities to an effort to assist her ladyship whose peculiar case happens to lie within the field of study which for some years I have more and more been making my specialty."

"So Sir Porter advised me, sir. And the sooner you begin the treatment the better it will be, I am sure," answered the dean sitting back in his chair with the tips of his fine fingers held together in front of him.

"You did not state the precise nature of her ladyship's supposed difficulty. May I ask that you do so now, sir?" said I taking up a pen and holding the notebook on my knee.

He eyed my writing materials nervously for a moment, and then said, "Of course, sir, you will appreciate the extreme delicacy of my position, and the fact that whatever it may become necessary for me to reveal to you must be regarded as a sacred confidence."

"Medical etiquette is quite clear on that point, sir. Also I am an English gentleman—so unless you intend to place me in possession of absolutely all the facts and whatever you or others may have inferred from them, I must respectfully decline to undertake the treatment of this case," I answered with quiet determination and making a motion to rise.

"Quite so—of course—of course—most certainly, sir," exclaimed the dean colouring and protesting with a gesture against my rising. "My apparent hesitation arose from the fact that it appears to be your intention to commit my words to writing—and it has been a principle of my whole career never to commit myself on paper. Servants or other evil disposed persons might come into possession of a paper, you know."

"Oh," I exclaimed smiling, "I was merely going to ask you to give me certain facts connected with the history of the case, which it will be necessary that I know. I assure you, sir, I never give any indication in these notes of the identity of the persons to whom they refer—

so that even were my servants to read them, no breach of confidence would result. You must see, I am sure, that I am obliged to learn all that I can about a patient—as, for example, the age, general condition, whether married or single, a mother or not, ancestry, education, religious bias, temperamental peculiarity, etc.; and all of this I invariably try to learn from others than the patient, in order to avoid placing him or her in an attitude of defense or suspicion.”

“Very properly, also,” said the dean eagerly; “very properly indeed, sir! And that clears up a delicate matter of which I was about to speak. It will be quite out of the question for you to appear to Lady Torbeth to have been specially retained for the purpose of treating her, you understand.”

I showed some surprise at this. Conspiracies in which unsuspecting victims are subjected to the scrutiny of medical experts hired to prove them insane are not new in the history of medical crime; but English clergymen are hardly likely to be prime movers in such diabolical work, and this particular dean, whose purity and integrity were as patent as his unctuous clericalism was in perfect good form, was the last man of whom such a thing could be suspected.

“You understand, sir,” he hastened to explain when he noticed my look of surprise, “that Sir Porter Hope and the other noted medical men who have examined the viscountess did so entirely without her knowledge, and Sir Porter himself suggested that I request you to

do the same. Now it happens," went on the dean with evident gusto, "that Mrs. Chelmsford is a connection—a rather close connection, I think I may say—of the Duke of Ackerby—the duchess being own aunt to Mrs. Chelmsford's brother-in-law, Sir Edmund Daws-Norlett, of Norlett Heaton, Devon, you know—and through this intimate connection of ours with his grace's family we are happily in a position to assure you that you may be in the way of receiving an early invitation to pass a week-end at Ackerby Castle—superb old place, Ackerby—excellent hunting—rare old paintings—that sort of thing—Ackerby Castle, sir, where my daughter, Lady Torbeth, is at present visiting."

Once more the dean paused, to allow me to develop fully a proper sense of gratitude for such an opportunity to meet the great—time, I fear, wasted, for as a matter of fact I was thinking how very like an auctioneer the reverend gentleman was while he was enumerating the advantages of Ackerby Castle, and also of how tickled Aunt Eunice would have been had she warranted the good dean's suspicions by listening to this piece of good fortune, at the key-hole!

"The idea being, I take it," I said presently, "that I am to meet her ladyship as simply another guest at the castle for the week-end, and do what I can to engage her in conversation in order to form an opinion of her mental condition?"

"Precisely! You take the point—exactly!" ex-

claimed the dean as flatteringly as if I had made a bright guess at an obscure riddle.

"But would it not be necessary for me to know along what lines it is feared that Lady Torbeth's reason is abnormal?" I asked.

"Most certainly! Sir Porter will confer with you prior to your visit to the castle, which I hope may be not later than next Saturday week, since my daughter's movements are uncertain and quite likely to be determined upon suddenly and I might add—ah—ah—with extraordinary—ah—absence of propriety. In the mean time I may tell you, sir, that Lady Torbeth's alarming condition became known to us when we discovered that she harbours the preposterous idea at times, that she has a dual or even more complex personality, the conduct and thoughts of each of which personalities, she insists, are in no way rightly to be judged by her proper personality—the 'herself' whom we know as Lady Torbeth."

I rose to my feet unconsciously, so great was my delight on hearing all this; and while I walked up and down, the dean went on.

"I need not point out to you, my dear sir," he said, "that such a hallucination is subversive of the very foundations of all morality and religion."

"Is it?" I murmured without knowing what I said and thinking only of my rare good luck in coming upon such a case.

As a matter of form I then asked the dean for the

usual data respecting my new patient. In a bungling, incoherent fashion the good man proceeded to give me a rather clear idea of his own prejudices and befuddled notions about metaphysics, but of his daughter's true state he could tell me nothing at all definite; so we agreed that I was to wait upon Sir Porter Hope at that distinguished and busy man's convenience. The dean left me with repeated assurances that he would at once set in motion the wheels within wheels whose involved revolutions were to bring about no less a miracle than an invitation for an unknown medical man to visit the seat of the ultra-smart Duchess of Ackerby.

I bowed my oily and condescending visitor out to his waiting cab with genuine cordiality, for I felt that he had brought me precisely what I wanted. If I found that Lady Torbeth's case was what I already began to believe it was, I realised that at last I had an opportunity for which I had been anxiously waiting ever since Steinmetz revealed certain of his theories to me. My first day of fame had indeed begun well. It was destined to end still better.

CHAPTER IV

GREAT was my aunt's delight when I told her that I was soon to be invited to visit Lord Ackerby, and she regaled me with prophecies of the desirable connections sure to follow my stay at the castle—Aunt Eunice had Burke's "Peerage" at her finger tips—and I have no doubt but that the worthy woman enjoyed visions of the coming time when I would be able to pick up my hundred guineas any morning I liked by merely packing off rheumatic dowagers to the little German spas, and regulating the supply of cigars and port wine for gouty old baronets.

That halcyon day had not yet arrived, however, so I started out upon my modest round of sick calls which had been interrupted by the visit of Dean Chelmsford. I had got through my work by five o'clock, and decided to devote the time until dinner to trying to get a clue to Doctor Yznaga's London address from some of my very few acquaintances among the more prominent practitioners. I failed in this, but my interviews with my prosperous confrères were not fruitless. All of them received me with unwonted cordiality if not deference; the now famous pupil of Steinmetz was, it seemed, a man to be taken seriously. More than one of those upon whom I called at once retained me in consultation—

precisely the sort of work which I wanted, since it leaves one free from the drudgery of looking in on convalescents, bothering with nurses, and all the routine matter which I, for one, am perfectly willing to let the other fellow attend to. Sir Porter Hope actually treated me with marked respect. A chance newspaper reference had been made to me, and lo! I had arrived!

Like everyone else, these medical gentlemen were full of Sir Arkell Mostyn, and in discussing his tragic end I learned from them that the great actor had been suffering for some years past from a strange nervous condition which caused him no end of distress and puzzled all of the experts whom he had consulted. They told me that Sir Arkell had become the victim of his own genius for impersonating characters, on several occasions having for some length of time fancied himself to be in truth the person whom he had last portrayed on the stage. Later, it appears, he would be suddenly overcome in the midst of a performance, by the belief that he was some character other than the one he was then playing, with a consequent psychological struggle which finally reduced him to a state of mind bordering upon insanity. All this served to corroborate my own hypothesis respecting the evident strain under which Sir Arkell seemed to me to be labouring on the fatal night. The fragments of lines from *King Lear* which I was sure that I had heard him interpolate I now took to indicate the probability that the demented king was disputing with the Jew the title to the lordly mental

establishment known as Sir Arkell Mostyn's "personality."


But while I heard with intense interest these significant bits of professional gossip, I could learn not a word of Doctor Yznaga, the one man living from whom I might hope to get anything like an adequate theory in explanation of them. To the physicians to whom I stated that the renowned old Spaniard had been present at the theatre, the news was a complete surprise, for none of them knew of him being in England. In fact, since his ignominious expulsion from Salamanca and his subsequent disappearance, nobody seemed to have known anything about him. With considerable secret amusement I listened to the criticisms by these learned gentlemen of the man who, in my opinion, had ventured farther into the abyss of human consciousness than any other had ever done and whose sublime courage in publishing the results of his researches had placed him under the ban of the sapient Faculty, and fastened upon him the sobriquet of "Don Quixote's alter ego." It was clear that Doctor Yznaga was not practising at all events in London, and I began to despair of being able to locate so retiring a man, especially in his exile in a foreign land. So I drove home to dinner with my mind filled with conjectures as to the old man's whereabouts, and also, I confess, with rather unaccountable regrets over not now being in the way of ever learning anything about his companion on the night of our only meeting—the woman who had

twice attracted me to their box by her fixed look, my lady of the emeralds.

On reaching home I found Aunt Eunice in a state of mind. A lady had called—a most distinguished lady, my aunt declared—and she had waited at least two hours for my return, manifestly on some matter of vital importance, for she had fidgeted about when I failed to show up, and had gone away only to rush off to dinner at half after seven. The lady had left neither her name nor a message, so that I was obliged to accept for what they were worth the guesses and highly coloured inferences with which Aunt Eunice entertained me at dinner. That my mysterious visitor was a great personage seemed certain to Aunt Eunice—there was the elegantly appointed carriage with two liveried servants on the box and an unmistakable coronet on the panel, not to mention the lady's air of annoyance on being kept waiting, and the freezing way in which she had declined my aunt's offer of a cup of tea; but as to her identity, there was not a vestige of a clue. She had curtly refused to give any address at which I might wait upon her, and had swept out of the house without saying that she would call again.

When my aunt left me to my after-dinner cigar I fell to trying to make out who my proud new patient might have been. The lady of the emeralds came into my mind, but I banished her on the ground that she would scarcely come to me, knowing as she did Doctor Yznaga of one of whose pupils I was a very modest pupil. No.

It could not have been she. Who then? With a laugh I next thought of Lady Torbeth, for beyond all doubt it must have been no other. She might very probably have known of her father's visit—the insane have always wonderful intuitions and suspicions—and her first thought would naturally be to head off any attempt on the part of her friends to prejudice me against her. What Aunt Eunice told me of the lady's nervousness bore out this view. Also her description of the lady's appearance seemed to agree with what Mrs. Hamilton-West had said to me about Lady Torbeth. Then, too, the dean had told me that her ladyship was constantly running off to consult new specialists, and my experience during the afternoon led me to believe that any one of twenty medical men might have sent her to me now that London had suddenly awaked to the fact that Steinmetz's lieutenant was in town. The more I thought about it the more I felt convinced that it was Lady Torbeth who had honoured me by waiting two hours to see me, and I hardly knew whether to be glad or sorry that I had not returned in time to meet her. Personally I should have greatly wished to get hold of her singular case without delay, but there was much wisdom in the dean's suggestion that I form my preliminary judgment of her mental condition while she remained ignorant of my professional interest in her. As I was passing through the drawing-room intending to spend the evening at the club I told Aunt Eunice what conclusion I had reached as to my unknown



caller, and she immediately fell in with my idea, and waxed important in consequence. With viscountesses waiting all the afternoon to see me, and men like Sir Porter Hope calling me into consultation, there was now nothing to prevent me achieving immense success, argued the good old soul, and I kissed her good-night and went out into the passage to put on my Inverness. I was doing this, when the telephone bell called me into my study.

I was asked to hold the wire for a moment while someone who desired to speak to me was summoned, and presently a woman's voice—the richest and most appealing voice I had ever heard—was asking me who I was. I stated that I was Doctor Croft, and begged to know what was wanted of me. There was a pause of some seconds as though my unseen friend felt some hesitation about revealing her object in addressing me. I even fancied that I could hear a hurried conference with some third party, and while I was waiting for the result I became strangely convinced that my aristocratic caller of the afternoon and the woman who had now rung me up on the telephone were one and the same. Oddly enough I felt positive pleasure in the thought that I was about to learn something of my lady of the emeralds whom I was beginning to regard with a not very reasonable feeling of romantic interest and childish curiosity.

"I am Miss Errington, the lady who called upon you this afternoon, you know," said the voice just as I began

to fear that the conversation was not going to take place.

"Oh, indeed?" I replied eagerly. "I am so sorry to have kept Miss Errington waiting. May I ask what it was that you wished to consult me about?"

"Pray don't think me rude, but I must see you—to-night! May I?" she asked.

"Certainly," I answered; "where? And it would be well to give me an idea of the case—whether surgical or not, you know."

"Oh, it's not a case of illness at all," she said in a tone of surprise.

"Dear me! What then?" I asked with still greater surprise.

"Don't ask me—please! All I can tell you now is that I must see you," she went on in evident agitation.

"Well, really, you know," I replied beginning to grow a bit suspicious.

"Now don't be cruel!" pleaded the voice. "You don't know me, but I know you very well—and I positively must see you."

"If I can be of service to you, madam, I shall be glad to call upon you to-morrow at any——" I was saying when she broke in with impatience.

"To-morrow means never, for I'm leaving England in the morning. You would come if it were my arm that was broken: it's my heart—so come!"

I jumped. Emotion, save as the subject of my scientific investigations, was not in my line. This was

clearly hysteria, and for a sedate man of five and thirty who was wedded to science, to suddenly find himself the object of a fashionable woman's hysterical outbreak—at ten o'clock at night, moreover—was a bit trying.

"Would it not be best to consult your family practitioner or some of your personal friends?" I suggested, thanking my stars that the interview was not face to face, for my own at the moment was red and breaking out into a perspiration far from mild.

"I have no friends, and Sir Porter Hope only laughs at me—so *do* please, please come to me and help me!" she implored, so piteously that I grew redder and hotter.

"Really, madam, this is most painful, most extraordinary," I expostulated. "Of course, as a gentleman and a medical man I am more than ready to afford you any assistance in my power, but——"

"Then come to me—to-night!" interrupted that throbbing voice.

I realised by this time that I was dealing either with a neurotic sufferer whom I ought to protect from herself, or an erotic adventuress from whom I must protect myself. The difficulty was how to determine which of the two she was. I had met both kinds, as what practising physician has not? But never before had I been placed in quite so embarrassing, or it might turn out to be, so dangerous a position. The circumstances were such as to lead me to fear that the woman sought to compromise me in some way—ladies do not throw themselves upon a man late at night to discuss their

state of heart; but, on the other hand, she had openly called at my house in the daytime, and her reference to Sir Porter Hope gave colour to the view that she was one of that noted specialist's nervous patients. At any rate, thanks to the merciful protection of distance, no great harm could come of an effort to diagnose the case of the heroine of my nocturnal adventure.

"May I ask why you sought my assistance, a total stranger, Miss Errington?" I inquired, speaking quietly so as not to excite her suspicions.

"Certainly," she answered. "De Freycinet of Paris spoke to me of you, and the moment I saw you the other night I recognised you, and I instantly knew what you were to me—so come, come!"

I dropped the receiver of the telephone. This was amazing, impossible! Yet again, there was the seeming contradictory evidence. Freycinet would without doubt refer any such case of emotional abnormality to me; but the woman's fatuous expression of love for me had a deucedly ugly ring in it. A clever adventuress, knowing through that very day's newspapers of my history and position, might very easily hit upon this very way to entangle me. Poor Beattie's experience in Buda-Pesth came into my mind in support of my fears.

"As you are evidently in a very nervous condition I feel that I should call upon you and give you something to quiet you, leaving our talk on other matters until you have regained your health. Where shall I find you?"

I said after rapidly developing a plan for safe-guarding my reputation both as a gentleman and as a medical man.

"I knew that you would come," she exclaimed eagerly "It will be impossible for me to ask you to come to this house—these people do not understand me at all; so if you don't mind, you might give me a little supper—at the *Cercle Potocka*—at eleven."

My prudence sounded a retreat on hearing this, but my curiosity was becoming acute, and anyhow my plan of campaign would cover any possible ambush; so I said, "The *Cercle Potocka*, where is that restaurant? I have only recently returned to London, you know, and I can't recall the place. Some new establishment, is it not?"

"Yes—Burleigh Court, St. John's Wood way, you know. All the cabbies know it. Meet me in the marble lobby at eleven. So awfully good of you!" she answered rapturously.

"I must once more tell you, madam, that I consent only because——"

"Hush! Quick, ring off the connection! They are coming," she murmured breathlessly, and the next moment I heard the click which announced that the circuit was cut.

I was in for it now! I found Aunt Eunice standing expectantly in the passage, and something in her good old face made me want to take her into my confidence and ask her advice; but this would have been only to

cause her needless anxiety, so I merely told her that I was called off on professional business and might be late in returning home.

My intention was to look up Burton, the one medical man in London whom I could call an intimate friend, and to ask him to go with me to meet Miss Errington; but when I reached my club I found Tredwell the painter there, and I knew him from of old for a man of steady nerves, cool judgment, and perfect familiarity with the ways of the world. He would serve my purpose better than Burton—all that I needed was a witness at the interview—and I accordingly asked him to join me over a bottle of champagne and a cigar.

“By the way, old chap, “I began when we had talked about his recent private exhibition of portraits, “you know London a deal better than I do; what sort of a place is the *Cercle Potocka*—out St. John’s Wood way, I believe?”

He put down his glass and looked at me quizzically.

“Oh, I say, you know,” he replied, “you don’t mean to say that you don’t know that paradise of the dubious, do you?”

“Never heard of it until this evening—honestly. What sort is it?” I asked.

“Oh, the place is all right, a palace; but it’s the sort of paradise to which men do not take their wives—that’s all. Best cooking on earth, wine at two guineas the bottle, music fit for the gods—that sort of thing. But why?” answered he smiling.

"Bless my soul!" I exclaimed, "it's not a respectable place, then?"

"That depends," said Tredwell with an expression of incredulity as to my sincerity. "Only the aristocracy can get into the gorgeous establishment, no one being admitted without a proper introduction; but, as I said before, men do not take their wives there. But I say, Croft, chuck your giddy innocence, and own up. You've been there, haven't you?"

"No—really. But I have an appointment there to-night at eleven with a lady," I replied naively enough.

Again Tredwell set down his wine glass and looked at me.

"A lady!" he said with seriousness. "If you are not ragging me, and she is a lady, take my advice, and don't take her there."

The situation was growing interesting. I realised now, of course, that I was about to be made the object of an attack by an adventuress, so I threw off my previous hesitation—arising from a desire to protect as far as possible my unknown patient—and decided to make Tredwell my ally by putting him in possession of the whole case as I believed it to be.

I told him what had occurred, giving him an almost verbatim report of the conversation over the telephone, as well as my vague surmises as to the identity of my new patient and the woman who had attracted my attention at the theatre on the previous evening. We agreed that the whole thing was simply a scheme to lure me

into being seen with the woman in a place compromising in itself, further benefits to be obtained by the creature when she had fascinated me with beauty of whose potency she doubtless had had marked evidence in the past. Tredwell's bohemian soul glowed at the thought of taking part in so melodramatic a plot, and as it was already quarter to eleven, we took a cab and drove rapidly to Burleigh Square. The one weak spot in my hypothesis was the fact that, if the woman we were now going to meet was the one who was with Doctor Yznaga at the Three Feathers, she could hardly be a woman of light character—or was she deceiving the innocent old dreamer? However, we would very soon know.

Burleigh Square proved to be no more than a small court just off a brightly lighted thoroughfare. Dismissing the cab, I stationed myself within the arch of the marble lobby, while Tredwell took up his watch just over the way in the shadow of a small shop. We had waited not more than two or three minutes, when a four-wheeler turned into the court and a tall woman thickly veiled and wearing a magnificent opera cloak alighted. She paid the cabman, and then came up the steps into the lobby. There she stood looking about with manifest excitement and embarrassment, and I stepped forward lifting my hat.

"I beg your pardon, madam, but if you are Miss Errington——"

"Oh, Mr. Croft!" she broke in, stretching out a trembling hand; "I'm so glad!"

As I looked at her I felt an indescribable repugnance for the idea that this queenly woman with her air of exquisite refinement and her low, musical voice, could by any possibility be what her present situation only too certainly indicated that she was. Inexplicable though the thought might be, I did at that painful moment think that by some horrible sequence of circumstances of which I was ignorant she had been placed in a monstrously false light from which I must rescue her at all hazards.

"You are a lady, Miss Errington. Pardon me, but ladies do not come here. I cannot permit you to enter this place without imploring you not to do so. I shall not go in with you."

She started and trembled violently. I could not see her face, but I knew that it was crimson. She drew herself up to all of her superb height, and then suddenly breaking down she staggered toward me so that I feared that she would fall.

"Take me away—for God's sake! I did not know—I thought—Oh, my God! what does it all mean? Where am I? Who are you sir?" she went on in an incoherent way that was frightful to witness.

"Quick! get a cab," I called out to Tredwell, and while he went into the adjoining highroad to fetch it, I drew the wretched lady across the court to prevent us being seen by anyone coming or going through the door of the club house.

I was none too quick about it, either, for we had no sooner reached the other side of the court than a cab

rattled into the square and a man got out and ran up the steps. He had a hurried and apparently heated parley with the attendant who opened the door, and then returned to his cab and drove off as rapidly as he had come. Tredwell came back with a closed cab in a few moments, and I assisted Miss Errington into it.

"Tell him, the top of Park Lane—I shall walk from there," said Miss Errington when I closed the door of the cab.

The driver waited for another carriage to pass through the narrow alley leading into the court, and while he was standing still at the steps of the club I saw that Miss Errington had thrown back the heavy opera cloak as if to cool off after her excitement. When at length the cabby started, Miss Errington seemed to remember what had just occurred, for she leaned out of the window of the cab and held out her round bare arm to take my hand.

"Thank you!" she said, sadly, and she was gone.

On the arm which she held out to me I saw a curious Oriental amulet of filigree gold set with splendid emeralds. I stood bewildered for a second, and then followed Tredwell out into the lighted streets. All I could think of for some minutes was that I might be able to learn at least something from Doctor Yznaga about the woman who had now for the second time filled me with not altogether comfortable thoughts.

"By the way, Croft," said Tredwell when we were seated at our club again, "did you see a man go into the

blooming inferno while you and the veiled lady were doing the tragic in the lobby?"

"I saw him—from across the way, however. Why?" I replied.

"Did you recognise him?"

"No. I scarcely looked at him, and anyhow I could not have seen his face from where I stood. Who was he?"

"An unwritten law prevents a man from mentioning another whom he may chance to see in certain places, you know."

"That's so," I answered, and we took up something else to talk about.

But for that same unwritten law, the greater part of this story need never have been written.

CHAPTER V

THE feeling that I could perhaps hear something of Miss Errington from Doctor Yznaga served to heighten my disappointment when a week passed without me being able to get any clue to his hiding place. As a last resort I was about to try to learn his London address by writing to some one or other of his former pupils on the Continent, when I was rejoiced by receiving a letter from him written in a quaint, formal, antique hand of great delicacy, and begging my pardon for a wrong which the punctillious old gentleman fancied that he had done me. He had harboured all sorts of hard feelings against me, he declared, for having allowed a whole week to go by without paying him the promised visit, when he happened to remember that on the card which he had given me was no address—"so vain is old age, my dear young friend, that I must have supposed that everybody would know where a friendless and discredited old man was buried. Ah, *Dios!* how that arrant humbug, the Ego, does flatter one into any degree of conceit!"

He wrote that he was living in a little "bird cage" at the back of a wee garden at Maidenhead—of all places! where he and "the only wise woman in the world (since she knows that she knows nothing) have the flowers

and the river and the rare old Spanish dishes—and a welcome for the pupil of my own old pupil, Steinmetz, which two men are not far from the kingdom. So, esteemed and learned friend, honour an old man, and come.”

Before I could communicate with the great man, however, and learn when it would be most convenient that I come, and just how to reach his little oasis, I received another and quite different letter from no less a personage than the Duke of Ackerby, bidding me do him the honour of dining with him at his club on the next night but two. This, alas, put off my visit to Maidenhead until it was too late for me to avail myself of certain vitally significant information which Doctor Yznaga gave to me. So like a thing of idle chance does life seem to us all at crucial moments! At the time, however, my chief cause of regret at the delay was, that it tantalised my curiosity to discover what inconceivable relation existed between the venerable old Spaniard and the beautiful woman of whom he wrote in such a peculiar way. Had he been another man, the water-side villa at Maidenhead would have suggested a romance, but not Mrs. Grundy herself could possibly object to this rather perplexing but certainly innocent attachment of the octogenarian philosopher for his eccentric young protégée. Miss Errington was, no doubt, a patient of his, and in that case it would be part of my professional duty to advise him of her recent escapade. I satisfied myself with the theory that the

emotional woman had learned who I was from Doctor Yznaga at the theatre, and with the cunning and daring of insanity had sought me for the purpose of protesting against what she might think the old doctor's cruelty or lack of skill. Nor was this view of the case weakened by Miss Errington's sudden collapse and abandonment of the purpose which had brought her to our meeting in St. John's Wood. On the contrary, that is precisely what one in her condition would be most likely to do in the reaction of a partially lucid interval. But be all this as it might, several days must now elapse before I could hope to see Yznaga or hear anything more of Miss Errington.

On reaching the club on the evening named by the duke, I was conducted to one of the small smoking-rooms where I found his lordship waiting for me in a state of expansive cordiality which I diagnosed as the result of an afternoon of unlimited spirits and hot water. He seemed to be a man of anywhere from forty to fifty, but his very smart appearance—he was perfectly groomed and a dapper little man withal—as well as his effervescence showed that he was as he at once took pains to inform me, “a boy, sir, a devilish tart old boy, damme.”

Whatever embarrassment I felt on thus for the first time finding myself cheek by jowl with a peer of the realm, vanished before his irresistible bonhommie.

“Yes, my dear man,” rattled on the duke when we had sat down to dinner, “the dean wrote me that it

would please Amelia—deucedly pretty woman, Amelia, in her time, and no end too good to be thrown away on a parson—if I asked you to run down for a bit of hunting at Ackerby next season. An ass, the dean, don't you think? All parsons are donkeys, but the dean is an ass, sir, properly. You go in for horses, then?"

"Well, really, you know," I stammered, "I fear that my interest in horses heretofore has been limited to—dead ones."

The duke roared.

"Awfully good, that! Dead ones? Ha, ha! You share my own ability to bet on the dead ones, eh? Capital, that. Dead ones is good, devilish good! But if your luck, like my own, has left something to be desired, hunting has more than made up for it all, eh? With what hounds did you hunt before going abroad?"

I winced. My knowledge of the horse was limited strictly to the brain cells and other organs of defunct ones which I had dissected.

"Oh, I fear that your grace has been getting me confused with some one else. I am not a hunting man at all. In fact, I have been abroad for fifteen years—ever since I was a mere lad, that is—and so have had no opportunity to ride to hounds."

"But, like a sensible man," went on the duke beaming on me, "now that you have arrived as a great man you intend to go in for it. Quite right, too. Nothing like hunting for medical men—no end better than their own stuff for the liver. But I say, you know, you'll run

down to Ackerby before the hunting season, will you not? I think the dean said something about you being interested in the portraits, or the Roman remains, or the armour—that sort of thing—at the castle.”

Thanks to Aunt Eunice’s graphic accounts of the Hampshire seat of the duke, I had got a hazy notion of some of the wonders at Ackerby. At all events this line would be safer than horses, so I took it up with a great show of eagerness. I was relieved to find that the duke was not in the confidence of the cautious dean in the matter of Lady Torbeth’s mental condition, and that my genial host would therefore not suspect my motive in expressing interest in the castle.

“Then by all means you must run down at once,” he said when I had waxed enthusiastic. “Shall we say next Saturday?”

“Impossible, I fear; but the week after.”

“Right you are! And by the bye, I saw Lord Torbeth—great bore, Torbeth, don’t you think?—this afternoon, and he told me that he knew you. He’s running down next week also.”

This gave me a fine opening. I could now allude to Lady Torbeth in a perfectly casual way, and so be able to judge to what extent others shared her father’s anxiety, if at all.

“Yes,” I replied, “I met Lord Torbeth at the private view of Tredwell’s pictures—we both knew Tredwell at Oxford—but I am afraid that his lordship formed anything but a happy impression of me, for I declined

to sell him my stall at the theatre on Sir Arkell Mostyn's last night. He appeared to be very anxious to attend that performance, too."

"Glad you did. Served him right! No end of a screw, Torbeth; but he spoke very decently about you to-day, though—said you were the coming man, that sort of thing," remarked Lord Ackerby cheerily.

"Very good of him, I'm sure," I laughed, and then added, "I think the dean said something about Lady Torbeth being at Ackerby Castle at the present time."

"Yes, she is," answered the duke abruptly.

"Mrs. Hamilton-West once told me that Lady Torbeth is the prettiest and the cleverest woman in England. I have never met her," I said at random.

The effect of my simple words was singular. From his former manner of an unemotional, horsey, pagan man about town with a touch of Pickwickian effusiveness, the duke changed completely immediately upon my mention of Lady Torbeth. He became a man of highly sensitive and sentimental nature, betraying the shrinking and reserve of such a person. I could scarcely believe my eyes. But the change was transient. At once regaining his wonted air of jocularly and worldly wisdom, he lit a fresh cigar slowly and then replied to me.

"Yes, Torbeth certainly got the pick of the flowers in the deanery garden—hardly say, though, that Lady Torbeth is a great beauty. Clever enough—yes, by Jove, she's as clever as they make them, as you'll find

to your cost if you take her out to dinner—Wagner and art and literature, that sort of thing, you know! Funny thing, too, about the viscountess—she's a woman's woman. I never heard a woman praise any other woman; but all of them are keen on Lady Torbeth—just as you tell me, was Mrs. Hamilton-West. Men think the viscountess awfully the thing—until she stings them! A wasp, sir, a wasp, damme, is Lady Torbeth, when she turns on one."

I watched the duke as he rattled on for another half hour or so, taking the opportunity whenever I could, to refer again to Lady Torbeth. Each mention of her name sent the transient expression of sentiment across his grace's normally *blasé* face; also each got from him some kind of opinion respecting her ladyship, which was of value to me.

When I left him, having arranged to meet him again before going down to Ackerby, I congratulated myself upon having hit on certain possibly important discoveries. I had learned first of all, that Lord Ackerby was a naturally emotional and finely grained man striving to dull the pain of some life-hunger by a ceaseless pursuit of sensual pleasure; and, in the second place, I had become fully convinced that Lady Torbeth was going to prove very well worth my undivided attention for some time to come

CHAPTER VI

ON arriving at Ackerby Castle on the following Saturday week I was left to my own devices until five o'clock tea. This was served in the "Pompeiiian court," a rather fine marble pavilion or colonnade which the present duchess had built between the grim old Tudor armoury and the fantastic gingerbread iron-and-glass palm house, where, of course, it looked ludicrously out of place. I met my hostess at tea. Lady Ackerby I found to be a faded, self-conscious, affected woman of forty, and I immediately surmised that I had the clue to the poor duke's life-hunger or life-tragedy or whatever it was that cried out to be drowned in perpetual brandy-and-soda.

The duchess was one of those negative women who, incapable of secreting an idea themselves, "go in for" the ideas of others, more especially if those ideas are what such papers as such creatures read refer to as "original" or "the latest" or "ultra smart." I had not wandered about the noble old pile an hour, before I was made painfully aware that the reigning chatelaine had, in the maddest sect of that religion, lived a faddist.

There was a gloomy and overpoweringly gorgeous "Turkish room" which the housekeeper—an honest, buxom, middle-aged non-conformist sort of widow—

had been instructed to tell those "viewing" the castle, was "after the loveley 'arem of the Caliph of Bagdad," to which the pious soul added her own opinion when showing me the room, that "it must be 'eavingly to live in a 'arem, mustn't it, sir?"

The great hall was still in its stately dignity as of old. Perhaps the lord of the castle had drawn the line here, and insisted upon excluding the "latest" from the ancient hall of his forebears. But nearly all the other apartments on the ground floor had been recently "done over" and done to death. Each room had been treated after the style of some alleged past period. There were "Louis Quatorze" and "Louis Quinze," and "Directoire," and "Middle Flemish" apartments. The morning-room, architecturally intended to be a groined and vaulted chamber of the late Tudor style, rejoiced now in the rosebud furbelows and spindle-legged airiness of a Petit Trianon boudoir.

There was, off the billiard-room, a hall of revels called the "*Salon des Folies*," in which were roulette wheels, card tables of every variety, planchette boards, and a bewildering number of contrivances unknown to me. In another part of the tortured old fortress I unearthed traces of earlier crazes—like geological strata enabling one to follow her grace's ascent from one level of faddiness to yet higher and giddier levels. The amazing duchess had evidently "gone in for" pretty well everything, from ping-pong to collecting whatever is collectible under the sun.

And she had not failed to get her reward. For many years I remember coming upon items in the society columns of the newspapers, in which Lady Ackerby was spoken of as "that always resourceful originator of clever new departures in the way of entertainment for her guests." Her inane schemes for reducing rational English ladies and gentlemen to fatuous imbeciles were declared to be "those charmingly novel entertainments at Ackerby Castle, which the duchess, who is nothing if not original, may be counted upon to prepare as a surprise for her fortunate friends."

If the material shell in which she had encrusted herself was this bizarre jumble of succeeding fads, what, I asked myself, must be the inner intellectual life of this ducal mollusk? While exchanging my tweeds for a frockcoat before making my way to the Pompeiian monstrosity and tea, I thought much of poor Lord Ackerby, and a mighty impulse of sympathy surged up out of my heart for the boyish old sport thus fatally yoked with the creature who had "done over" his hereditary halls into an annex of bedlam, and, no doubt, "done over" also the dashing, all-possible fellow whom she had captured twenty years ago, into what I now had found him to be! On my way down the grand stairs I noticed that the noble mullioned window on the landing had been filled with "art crystal" representing "Scenes from the Rubaiyat of Omar Khay'yam." This finished me. I instinctively extended a plenary

indulgence to all seeking refuge in brandy-and-soda from art-crystallised wives.

Lady Ackerby received me effusively—and alone! This latter fact, I confess, frightened me considerably, for her very first words indicated that the dreadful duchess had read up enough along the line of recent medical (newspaper) thought to enable her to make herself an insufferable bore to any luckless medical man whom she might get cornered. I made good use, however, of the turn which her idiotic talk took, by adroitly drawing from her grace the fact that she did not know what my special line of practice was, which discovery led me to the further inference that the shrewd dean had for once been suspicious to good purpose. He had clearly not allowed his wife to give the duchess the faintest idea of my real object in coming to the castle. This was most of all what I wished to know. I then had no difficulty in directing the dribble of conversation into the channel of Art with a flattering remark—may I be forgiven!—about her grace's manifest devotion to it.

And away she went! I sipped the awfully good tea in the awfully small cups while she trotted out her hobbies for a canter among the pre-Raphaelites, "Morris effects," colour schemes, ecclesiastical embroidery, and heaven knows what else, until the merciful arrival of the drag with a load of week-enders called my tormentor off, and I fled to my room to smoke away the effects, and to wait for dinner. I never longed for that function


quite so hungrily as then. I was not keener than usual either, but it would be at dinner that I would at last meet the woman who by this time was seldom out of my mind, and of whom in one way or another I had gradually come to know a good deal. I went so far as to fancy that I should be able to pick out Lady Torbeth from among no matter how many women I might find her in the drawing-room. Finally the dressing bell went, and I got into my evening clothes and reached the drawing-room a few minutes before eight o'clock.

There were perhaps eighteen or twenty persons there, among whom I recognised only my hosts and the tall, stooping, rather consumptive-looking figure of Lord Torbeth. I failed ignominiously in my attempt to identify Lady Torbeth in the bevy of smartly gowned women of varying degrees of common-placeness who were buzzing about old Lady Altonheigh, the remarkable old dowager who had recently shamed the strenuous young women of athletic set by actually climbing some rather ticklish peaks in British Columbia, where her son, the present earl, was interested in mines of some sort. Lord Torbeth came over to me immediately he caught sight of me, and we stood chatting apart until dinner was announced and Lady Ackerby presented me to the old mountain-climbing countess, whom, she said, I was to have the singular honour of taking out.

I took her out. And all through dinner the tireless old lady took me up and down the alps of a long life of daring adventure in a way that would have proved

diverting enough, had not my mind been racked in the effort to determine which of the women down the flower-decked table was—she! As my mountain-climber was stone deaf, conversation was not expected of me, nothing more being required than that I give her now a smile and again a look of amazement as she related a humourous incident or a triumph, and these tokens of interest I gave her with alternate regularity—I hope at the proper times! With the ices we scaled our last glacier—my very legs seemed to ache from fatigue—and the women rose and left us. I was piqued. Lady Torbeth had eluded my powers of insight. My pet conceit is, that I can read character in the face, so I that naturally felt non-plussed on finding myself absolutely at a loss to say back of which of these ten quite insignificant faces dwelt that extraordinary mind in which I had been cherishing the belief that I was to find the verification of the most audacious hypothesis ever launched by empiric speculative science. Anyone of these uninteresting women might now be she; one of them, of course, was she—but by all that was holy in science, not one of them should have been she!

My aunt had read me from some Ladies' Own Gazette or other, that a delightful feature of the Saturday-to-Monday parties at smart country houses is the way in which nobody is expected to do anything particular at any particular time, dinner being the only formality during the whole charming period of doing



as one pleases. Accordingly, as nobody seemed to expect me to do anything at all, and Lord Torbeth had privately informed me that he was going to bed at the earliest possible moment—"that old mountain nuisance, you know, will talk about herself until midnight," he said—I resolved upon a like retreat, and when the women were listening to the thrilling account of an ascent of something somewhere, and the men had drifted along the line of least resistance into the saloon of follies for a night of it, I saw my chance, and escaped.

I had not been in my room more than ten minutes and was just throwing myself on the sofa for a look into the first volume of de Moulin's new work on the radio-activity of the nerve centres, when there was a knock at my door, and very much to my surprise, in response to my "Come in!" Lord Torbeth entered.

"Isn't it awful—really?" he asked as he sat down and yawned.

"Isn't what awful?" asked I laughing at his woe-begone air.

"Why, this blooming idea that we are having a good time here, don't you know. I never go to people's houses anyhow, except for the only rational occasion for the gathering together of animals—dinner; but I find that Lady Torbeth is diverted by the idiots one meets at these week-end horrors, so I urge her to go in for them, and I go along myself occasionally. You haven't met the viscountess? I came down to this

beastly old circus—poor Ackerby, how I feel for the poor old boy!—I came down, I say, only because Lady Torbeth was here; all for nothing, as you see, for she left here a couple of hours before dinner.”

He laughed lugubriously as he said this, and I hoped that this prevented him seeing any sign of the surprise and chagrin with which I heard that my own coming to the castle was on a wild-goose chase. It was only Saturday night, and there I was stuck until Monday—with no hope of seeing Lady Torbeth, and in for who could say how many hours of mountaineering with my deaf old partner at dinner! It was unthinkable! I remember that with all my disgust over the fiasco of my visit, however, I felt a touch of pride in the discovery that my humiliating failure to identify Lady Torbeth at dinner had been owing to the completely exonerating fact that she was not there!

The viscount went on to picture the tortures in store for us over Sunday, telling me that the duchess’s very “latest” had been to “go over to Rome,” since which event she was in the habit of fetching some insinuating monsignor or other for the purpose of enlightening the heathen, her guests, every Sunday.

“Oh, but I say, you know, this won’t do—for me, that is,” I said when he paused.


“Last Sunday was something awful,” continued Lord Torbeth. “The popish parson proved to be a very decent sort, for he refused to talk shop; but the dear duchess made up for that by lecturing us all for

an hour! Beastly, I tell you! And I jolly well don't mean to come down again."

"Couldn't we—as it were—cut?" I suggested, and he jumped at the idea.

"By Jove!—that's the answer! As a busy medical man you can plead urgent duty; and I can very properly run off to follow the viscountess. We might even clear out before anybody is stirring in the morning, leaving a note explaining. How's that?"

We both laughed heartily over this, and I began to feel drawn to the wistful, sad and thoughtful man whose illuminating talk on art that afternoon in Tredwell's studio had made me want to know more about this not at all ordinary nobleman with his un-English sentimentality and insight. He seemed to reciprocate my feeling to some extent, for he lingered on, and finally rang and told the servant who responded, to tell his man not to sit up any longer, as he was going to talk over some matters with me which would make it late before he should be going to bed. This surprised me, because he had not hinted at a wish to consult me about anything, and he was not aware, as far as I knew, that the dean had asked me to meet the viscountess. When I heard his command to the servant I felt and earnestly hoped that it was about his wife that he would speak, for I knew that from this unusually clear-headed and forceful man I would get an infinitely more profound and accurate statement of my proposed patient's real condition than I had got from her pious but purblind



father. Then, too, now that I knew the man, I would be glad to be rid of the professional secrecy which seemed somehow to place me at an unfair disadvantage. With such a chap as Lord Torbeth, I felt almost guilty of dishonour in undertaking his wife's case without his knowledge. For many reasons, therefore, I hoped that it was about Lady Torbeth that he then wished to consult me. And it was.

When the servant closed the door, Lord Torbeth went over to it and listened, coming back only when he heard the door at the other end of our corridor also close. Then he offered me a cigar; said he hoped that I was not too tired to give him an hour or two, as he had something of the gravest significance to discuss with me; and when I nodded assent he began in a slow, clear-cut, perfectly unimpassioned way to tell me the most remarkable story that I had ever heard. I listened in silence till he was done—at three in the morning—and when he went off to try to get a few hours' sleep, I knew that not I, but the genius of Yznaga alone could cope with the incredible problem presented by the brain of the Viscountess Torbeth.

I walked to the neighbouring town in time to catch the first train on Sunday morning; and with an eagerness which I had never known before, I started out to find the hiding place of the old philosopher, little dreaming what was in store for me.

CHAPTER VII

At my house I was sorry to find that Yznaga's answer to my letter had not yet arrived, and that consequently I must explore the river about Maidenhead in search of him. It was already quite late in the afternoon when at last I found his house. It stood at the bottom of a narrow lane or footpath between high garden walls, its quaint little gables shutting off all view of the river beyond from one approaching it, as I did, from the high-road. Into the cottage I was admitted by the good doctor himself, whom I found attired in a faded dressing-gown of quilted purple silk, curious old embroidered slippers, and the little skull-cap which had attracted my attention at the theatre.

He was delighted to see me, and led the way through the passage to a rear door which gave upon the little garden at the back—a tiny bit of lawn bordered by trimmed hedges of great age and height, and leading down to the river. I showed my pleasure on coming into the really lovely little spot, and the old man watched me with the delight of a child. We sat for a few moments on a form standing against the wall of the cottage, and I used the time trying to decide just how to approach the subject of Miss Errington, his protégée of the tangent tendencies. I had lived in Spain: I knew

how nice is Spanish feeling, how quick to take affront at the least breach of delicacy; so that I realised that I must be wary in probing. The old *Hidalgo's* first words, however, seemed to make any effort on my part unnecessary.

"Before I ask you to go with me to my small workshop yonder," he said pointing to a little portable house of corrugated iron standing in the corner of the garden, "I must present you to her to whose excellent taste is due the attractive appearance of our little palace of dreams, and but for whose loving service I scarcely know how I should get along in this cold land where they know neither how to think, act—nor cook!"

For an instant his poetic allusion to their palace of dreams made me wonder if after all the old dreamer might not be dreaming that he was young again, and I had rudely invaded the romantic retreat of the blind god. But one look at the old thinker's head drove the absurd notion out of my own. My wild hypothesis was half a century too late.

"I shall be honoured, indeed, sir, to meet the lady. The hope of doing so added materially to the anticipations of pleasure with which I came, for ever since——"

I was going to say, that ever since I had seen her in his box at the theatre I had hoped to meet Miss Errington; but a strange look of challenge in the old man's glowing eye caused me to alter the turn of my sentence, assuring him that ever since he had written to me of

"the wisest woman in the world" I naturally felt desirous of the honour of meeting her.

"And you shall do so, my friend," chuckled the old fellow clapping his hands, not as I supposed out of sheer childish delight, but as a signal to Miss Errington.

"I can make her hear me in that way when my poor old voice fails to reach her," he explained, and my eyes followed his in the direction of a side door. My feelings at the moment were decidedly mixed. If Miss Errington's melodramatic excursion to my house, and its perilous sequel were a secret, would not my unexpected appearance here in her hiding place give her a shock on suddenly seeing me, and frighten her into supposing that I had come for the purpose of betraying her confidence? I resolved to show her by my manner from the first instant of our meeting, and if possible later by an explicit assurance, that I had placed no uncharitable construction upon her hysterical outbreak, but on the contrary, would treat the whole episode as a bit of professional experience to be sacredly guarded.

My earnest hope was, however, that in her normal state of mind she would not recognise me. The old man clapped his hands a second time, and presently I heard a queer sound, as of little blocks of wood being tapped together, coming from the direction of the low wing which extended from the end of the house. *Claque! claque! claque!* came the patter, and an indefinable feeling of astonishment prepared me for the truly shocking surprise which was sprung upon me. I stood there

waiting to see the tall, imperious English woman who had twice come into my life, and whose beauty of figure had impressed me almost as much as her mental state had aroused my interest. The patter ceased, and as a door in the end of the wing opened slowly I lifted my hat, and prepared myself to convince Miss Errington of my absolute good-will, by a smile of unmistakable friendliness. The door opened, and an old woman appeared, bowed with extreme age, wrinkled as I think I had never seen anyone wrinkled before, of a deep copper colour, and shading with her palsied hand the sudden glare of the outer sunshine from her screwed-up watery eyes.

“Behold!” cried the doctor to me in English; “behold my only friend, my loyal comrade in exile, Pepita—whom you take to be old, but who, I assure you, sir, is exactly of the same age as she was forty years ago, yes sixty years ago! You behold now, sir, the wisest woman in the world, since she knows that she knows nothing; also the best cook outside of Pampeluna—such *pollo á la Andalusia*, *sopa borracha*, such everything, as you never tasted, sir; also she is the perennial fulfilment of Holy Writ, since in her one sees why it is that except a man become as a little child he can not enter heaven.”

He held out a beckoning and reassuring hand, and the old crone tottered forward obediently, she turned down heels of her shoes causing them to drop at each step, with the resulting little tapping noise. She approached us with the simple shyness of a child.

"This, Pepita dear, is the distinguished gentleman of whom I have spoken to you—look, the gentleman would shake your hand—and now see to your laurels at dinner, for our guest has eaten no longer ago than yesterday at the board of a duke."

I grasped the withered hand which the old woman stretched out to me, and spoke to her, as of course Doctor Yznaga had done also, in Spanish.

"*Misericordia de Dios! pero el señor puede hablar Español!*" cried Pepita with innocent joy on finding anyone so gifted in this land of barbarians; and we all laughed and chatted for a while, both of my new old friends being especially pleased to hear that I knew their native city of Pampeluna well, having frequently gone there to consult Modena, the noted chemist.

Then Doctor Yznaga sent Pepita about her household tasks, and after showing me his flowers and bee-hives, he unlocked the door of the little laboratory and we went in. As may well be supposed, from the instant that my first surprise on finding that Miss Errington was not the old man's "wisest woman" had passed away, my mind was filled with all sorts of conjectures as to who, then, she might be; and I determined at all hazards to find out as soon as our little tour of inspection were over and we had settled down for our real talk. I was, accordingly, glad when Yznaga led me into his little workshop.

Its diminutive size prepared me to find that, within, the laboratory of the greatest genius in the domain of

experimental physico-psychology was pitifully inferior in extent and equipment to those of a score of men, who, in comparison with him, were mere tyros. In fact, as Yznaga at once explained to me, here was properly no laboratory at all, but rather, as he characteristically put it, "a peaceful dreamery where I can hope to develop in the dark-room of my imagination the negatives taken during sixty years of incessant labours, which, thanks to an excellent memory, I have completely at my command. Apparatus, my dear sir, while of course essential in the preliminary work of collecting data, is, between you and me, the curse of the modern scientific world, since its absorbingly interesting use is made the end and not merely a means. Your modern thinker has no time for thinking—he is so busy collecting new material for thought! Is this not true?"

The old gentleman rambled on in this pleasant fashion for some little time before I made any effort to bring the talk around to the subject on which—after my interview the night before with Lord Torbeth—I felt that I must obtain the immediate help of the only man on earth capable of giving it effectually. But before coming to the question of trying to induce him to take up the case of Lady Torbeth I could not resist the temptation to try to learn something about my lady of the emeralds who was rapidly becoming a full-fledged mystery. Now that I knew that she was not a member of his household I felt less hesitation in approaching the courteous and touchy old cavalier. I could very

properly assume that the lady was either his patient or a friend, and in either case it was plainly my duty to advise him of her recent hysterical adventure. So I laid my plans to edge in my question at the end of a long dissertation on the value of the imagination in pursuing the exact sciences. As usual, Yznaga's peroration was *ex cathedra*, a final pronunciamento certainly calling for no reply from me; so I sprung my mine.

"By the bye, Doctor Yznaga," I said after a moment's digestive pause, "I think that I should advise you that Miss Errington sought me the other day, and that I found her to be in a very nervous and excited condition. I thought you ought to know this."

"Miss Er-r-ington?" repeated the old man, the delicious roll of the *r* betraying him. "I think that I have never before heard such a name. Who is this lady, sir?"

I was dumbfounded, but it was too late to do anything but make a clean breast of it.

"Why, sir, you know to whom I refer—the lady who was your companion on the night of Sir Arkell Mostyn's death. Miss Errington, you recollect," I said smiling.

"Ah! And you tell me that the name of that beautiful woman is Miss Errington? I did not know her name. You see, it was quite by chance—a most delightful chance for me—that the gracious lady honoured me by accepting a seat in my box. Permit me to narrate for you the pretty little story. I was about to pass into the theatre, when I heard this lady imploring them to

sell her a place anywhere in the house. This they could not do, for the entire theatre was packed; so I ventured to beg the lady to accept a place in my little box—and as she saw that I was an old fellow, she consented. In return for this little service which I was only too happy to do her, she insisted upon taking me to my hotel in her splendid carriage, and she seemed to be offended because I would not allow her to pay me for her share of the box. A pretty little romance, is it not? But, alas! it did but make me realise how old I am! You tell me that this lovely woman is ill? I am sorry to hear it.”

I scarcely heard what the old man said after his statement that he knew nothing of Miss Errington. How, I asked myself, was I now to learn anything at all about her? However, as it would be useless to discuss the matter with Yznaga, I dropped the subject with a casual remark, and turned my mind to the serious business of persuading him to look into the case of Lady Torbeth which was fast absorbing all of my thought.

“I wonder,” I began by way of bringing the talk around to myself, “if I have not you, sir, to thank for that otherwise inexplicable notice of myself in the newspapers, in connection with the death of the great actor—honestly now?”

“Perfidious Albion! but one cannot turn around in this land of publicity, without being reported to have done so,” he exclaimed with beaming eyes. “Has some one, then, betrayed an unsuspecting old stranger?”

I confess, my young friend. I did return to the theatre after we parted that night, and I did so because I wished it generally known that a pupil of my own pupil Steinmetz, was now in London. It was only when you had left me that I recalled the fact that Steinmetz wrote me—we have been corresponding lately respecting de Moulin's experiments in the treatment of aphasia by the excitation of Broca's centre by radio-energy—wrote me, I say, that you were now living here. So that, since I had now so happily met you, I desired to have the world also meet you. A considerable part of the world met with your name the next morning, I was proud to see: may more and more meet you in your consulting-room speedily! How are you coming on, my friend?"

I laughed and bowed my thanks, and said, "And you know Steinmetz well? A most remarkable man."

"Truly—very remarkable, as you say; but unfortunately hampered by the limitations of his Teutonic mind with its passion for experiment and apparatus and data. Steinmetz lacks the creative faculty which only the imaginative Latin genius possesses. Surely, my young friend, you must claim at least a few drops of Latin blood, since you were able to write your work on 'Memory' whose closing chapters form rather an epic poem or a threnody than a purely scientific treatise?"

Again I laughed and bowed.

"Why, yes, Doctor, my mother was of Portuguese descent—my father met her when he was in the Civil Service in Madras—but I have always attributed my

love of science, not to my mother's Latin blood, but rather to my father's untiring and methodical temper."

The old poet rose and embraced me affectionately.

"As I thought—quite as I thought! Now we shall get on famously together. But you tell me nothing of yourself, your work here. Are you prospering in this dreadful land of the rule of thumb, where, as far as I have been able to observe, learning seems to be engaged in a bombastic and labourious effort to prove the obvious!—leaving the glorious ocean of the unknown to be traversed by others with eyes not to be satisfied till they behold the All?"

I began to fear that it would be impossible to get down to business with the old man in this mood of lofty philosophising, so I eagerly grasped the practical part of his question without commenting on the general remarks with which it had ended.

"Thank you, sir," I said quickly to prevent a change of subject, "I am getting on fairly well, especially since you so kindly advertised me so effectively. Indeed, I may tell you that many of the aristocracy and nobility are beginning to seek my advice. In fact, it was about the case of a noble lady that I looked you up to-day without waiting for you to give me an appointment. This case presents certain aspects which are absolutely incredible, but which at the same time have brought into intense focus certain theories toward which my mind has been steadily moving for some time. I tell you, sir, that this case opens a universe of psychological

meaning, a simply priceless opportunity to establish the hypothesis which you, sir, dared to hurl into the face of the world. Of course, as by this singular good fortune you are in London, it would be a crime against science were I to fail to avail myself of your guidance in treating this crucial case. I am authorised by the nobleman most intimately affected, to engage your services, and from what I know of your latest speculative work, no less than from the hint you dropped the other night about your interest in Sir Arkell Mostyn's curious case, I promise you, sir, that the case now referred to will afford you quite the most unprecedented opportunity for experiment, and, if I may allude without indelicacy to the matter, the nobleman of whom I speak will see to it that your remuneration will be substantial."

While I was speaking Doctor Yznaga had sat with his eyes shut, and giving no sign of special interest in what I said—until I mentioned the payment for his services. Then he opened his eyes and looked at me curiously.

"How the English mind flies to the monetary equation," he murmured; "but poor Pepita complains that we shall starve unless I begin to practise soon. So, my dear friend, that part of your statement will interest Pepita; the other part may interest me when I know more about it. Forgive an old man, but I was envying you your delightful ability to see a new universe opening to you every time that a new patient rings your door-

bell and reveals his ailment! It is a long time since I enjoyed such a feeling myself. Perhaps what appears to you to be an untrod path upward among the unknown heights may prove to be one of the beaten ways along which I have been journeying for half a century. But come, now, what is this case?"

I will not here repeat the long technical account I gave him of the peculiar state of Lady Torbeth's brain, and of my own theories with respect to it. Yznaga listened with growing interest, which by the time that I stopped had become intense. He was pacing up and down with his nervous, thin hands clasped together behind his back. I had not miscalculated the effect of what I had to tell him. He saw it all as I did. His mind leaped forward to grasp the opportunity for which he had waited a generation.

"You will undertake the case of Lady Torbeth, then, sir?" I asked at last.

"Ah, that will depend entirely upon you, Ethelbert Croft! Yes! Do not start. It will be for you to decide whether this woman's brain shall prove to be the occasion for the final escape of humanity from the tyrant PERSONALITY! But come, Pepita is calling us in to dinner. I never cross Pepita—too good a cook. Come!" laughed the old genius.

CHAPTER VIII

FAR into the evening we talked, and when at last the old man forbade me to discuss the case further we had come to the following understanding: Doctor Yznaga was to assume the charge of the case of the viscountess as soon as an interview with Lord Torbeth could be arranged; and I was to proceed to Paris immediately there to place myself unreservedly in the hands of Freycinet and de Moulin, who would prepare me for the terrible because unprecedented ordeal through which I had consented to pass for the cause of truth and in order to make feasible the proposed treatment of Lady Torbeth.

These points settled, Yznaga refused to talk about the case; so we sat smoking and watching the gay procession of boats of every kind passing up and down the river until, as it was getting late, I determined to try to get my old friend's version of Sir Arkell's most singular hallucination. There was method in my choice of his madness, for I well knew that if I could get Yznaga started on that topic, he would be sure to throw light which I very much wanted on the case in which I was about to play so weird a rôle.

"And now, Doctor," I pressed when he concluded a charming bit of talk on heredity, "you must not forget

that you promised when we first met, that you would tell me what you had heard concerning Sir Arkell Mostyn. It is quite late; will you not tell me now?"

"Ah, true," he replied innocently, not detecting my snare, "and I am glad that you mention that matter just at this moment, because it bears directly upon what I was about to take up. But why do you say, 'what I heard' about Sir Arkell? I pay but little attention to what I hear—from doctors! I *heard* nothing about the famous tragedian: I knew a great deal about him. It may interest you, sir, to know, that exactly two hours before the curtain rose on that fatal last performance, Sir Arkell Mostyn sat in the very chair which you now occupy. Did you suppose that an old fellow like me was in the habit of frequenting the playhouse for mere amusement?"

He fell to laughing in that quiet way of his, but his last words had so surprised me that I could not enter into his humour. Presently he went on again.

"For several months before his death the actor came to see me twice every week—de Moulin sent him to me—and I was present in the theatre each night for a month, in momentary expectation of what finally occurred. I knew that he was dead before you and I even rose to go into the green-room. You yourself must have observed all through the evening, that Sir Arkell was in terrible straits. Very well now, shall I tell you what I only in this world know of Sir Arkell Mostyn?"

We lit fresh cigars, and after the doctor had questioned me concerning certain advanced theories having to do with consciousness, he leaned back in his chair and began.

"Sir Arkell Mostyn was a genius. This means simply, that he possessed to an extraordinary degree the power possessed to some degree by all persons having imagination—the power, that is, of transferring other 'personalities' into his own brain, or, as it were, the faculty of passing the true thought-stuff of other minds through his own thought-machine, thereby entering, for the time being, into their very life. A writer must possess this power if his characters are to be said to 'live'; literary genius is just this ability of the author to place his brain passively in the hands of each of his characters in turn, with the result that he actually thinks their thought, lives their life. Well, then, dramatic genius goes still further, and the truly great actor is he who, while playing a rôle, ceases to be 'himself,' and becomes the other character. You follow me?"

"Certainly. This is no more than what everyone must perceive. What of it?" I asked trying not to show my surprise at his lack of his usual depth.

"Patience, my dear friend. Before I am done you will not think me foolish. I was about to inform you that in the case of the great actor who has just died, genius had ceased to be mere genius: it had become an absolute annihilation of 'personality'! Yes, sir! Sir Arkell Mostyn's brain had become like an empty



"Dr. Yznaga."

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and ruinous house through which any passing vagrant might roam at will, and which any self-assertive 'personality' could inhabit and stoutly protest against the effort to expel him. Age, disease, worry, had gradually worn away memory and the other paraphernalia of that vicious old usurper, Self; so that the premises were free to be invaded by others. Occasionally and for very brief periods the 'personality' known as Sir Arkell would drop into the old house of the brain on which the old fraud pretended to have a mortgage; but 'Hamlet' or 'Shylock' or 'Lear' or 'Othello' could chase him out at a moment's notice. You may imagine my anxiety each evening at the theatre as I watched the result of the treatment that I was giving that marvellous brain-tenement. Toward the end, in spite of all that I could do, old 'Lear' would persist in his determination to oust the Jew; and in their last battle for possession of the once magnificent edifice, Sir Arkell, as we are obliged to designate that particular combination of brain and nerves and tissues, died!"

I had heard all this with measureless delight, for it put into quaint terms the very essence of the hypothesis upon which I had been working for years. As I had anticipated, the old philosopher had warmed to his subject, and I was not slow in pressing the advantage which this gave me. Accordingly, I decided to raise objections to his points as they were made, knowing that this would drive him into betraying the location and calibre of his heaviest guns.

"But, Doctor, what of the Ego as postulated by metaphysics?" I said seriously.

"The Ego, sir, does not exist in any such sense as that which is commonly babbled about by theologians and others incapable of logical reasoning," retorted the old Spaniard, pacing about and clearing his formidable mental decks for action.

"Does not exist?" I asked with angelic wonder in my tone,

"Most assuredly not!" he thundered. "What is this pretender 'Personality' anyhow? What constitutes an 'individual,' I ask? What distinguishes 'me' from 'you'? I will tell you—nay, I will quote your own words, learned sir, as you very adequately define personality, in your work on Memory. You there state, that 'personality' is merely the sum total of the cerebral and nervous conditions and capacities found combined within a human being, and played upon by certain external forces. Very well, then, by your own terms you demolish the up-start Ego, since it is not a fixed, personal, spiritual something existing independently of the brain, but merely the transient, constantly changing and always accidental result of the play of external forces upon whatever may be the combination of cerebral and nervous conditions at any given time."

"Yes, but——" I shot in, firing hap-hazard.

"Wait, wait, my dear sir!" he protested, by this time glowing with zeal. "I was about to add, that not-

withstanding his actual non-existence, the tyrant Ego, the horrible phantom of Personality, has got a death-grip upon the mind of man—a mortgage on the brain—which it is the burning desire of my life to destroy forever, to cancel, if need be, with my life. Merciful God! look at this truth, my young friend. When it shall have been proved that I, that you, that all men, are what we are, not by reason of an isolated, solitary, shuddering wretch within us called the Ego differentiating each from all the others and to be held responsible here and hereafter for his peculiarities; but, sir, because through a long and complex combination of causes we are what we are, then we shall convict that arrant humbug, Personality, of being a fraud and a nightmare, for it will be evident that it has no existence apart from the conditions existing in the brain, which conditions are demonstrably subject to modification, curtailment, or even total extinction without what we call death befalling the body of which the brain is merely the noblest organ.”

“And what becomes of moral responsibility, then?” I blushed to ask; but I wanted Yznaga to go on, and the only way to get him to do so was by objecting.

“The point is not well taken, sir—it is puerile,” stormed the old man to my no little delight. “You ask what becomes of moral responsibility? I reply, that this present world of misery and horrors would be transformed into a paradise, were it but shown to man that the incandescent fibre within his brain is but his

little segment of the one eternal, universal all-life, and that this incandescent fibre—the lamp of consciousness, that is to say—glows bright or dim, gives light or burns out, accordingly as it is adjusted and fitted and cared for and co-ordinated with the demonstrable Best Way! What an ethical regeneration would follow any such conception of the true nature of life! What an unspeakable night of remorse and the tortures of ‘conscience’ and of memory and madness would be forever dispelled by the dawning of the new day of rational existence! With what fresh hope the present degenerate, sin-scarred, enfeebled, cringing human race would set about the glorious work of perfecting these brain-bulbs in which the life-current of electricity glows, for our little hour on earth, in what we choose to call man’s intellect! In this remarkable woman whose case you have wisely brought to my attention, we have, my dear young friend, the chance to dispute the mortgage on the brain before the open court of scientific Europe. As I have told you, to accomplish this, it will be necessary for you to hold your life as nothing in comparison with truth. You have consented. In the name of truth I thank you. Come, the night air strikes into my poor old bones.”

He embraced me at his door, and I hurried home filled with new and deep thoughts.

CHAPTER IX

"ETHELBERT CROFT, you are hopeless!" cried my aunt when she learned from me on Monday morning that I had stopped at Ackerby Castle only the one night. "Here I was congratulating myself upon your having come to your own at last, and living in expectation of hearing a glowing account of the new connections you were forming with the aristocracy—and now you have the face to tell me that you met only old Lady Altonheigh—you haven't yet told me what she wore—and then sneaked out of the castle before anyone was stirring in the morning! What *will* the duchess think of you!"

"As far as I was able to judge, the duchess is never guilty of thinking about anything," I replied with a laugh; "but really, you know, dear aunt, you need not worry, for I left a note for her grace, explaining that urgent professional duty had suddenly called me up to town. If she once gets the idea into that blooming mind of hers that I am 'the thing,' she will never cease telling her friends that 'dear Croft—you know, the famous medical man, my dear—always runs down for the week-end to the castle—that is, of course, when his enormous practice will permit. He is the coming man, my dear, and will certainly get a peerage at this rate!'"

Aunt Eunice laughed, but I really think that the good soul saw considerable force in the argument I had put into the mouth of the voluble duchess! She sat thinking for a few moments, and then said, "But the worst of it is, that Dean Chelmsford came here no less than three times yesterday—Sunday, too, remember!—and the poor man seemed no end anxious over something. I of course told him that you were at Ackerby, but for some reason that did not appear to impress him favourably. He really was in a pitiable state."

"Oh, the dev—I mean, was the dean really here? He left no word for me?" I asked, not altogether liking the very reverend gentleman's reappearance on the scene, especially as he had assured me, to my relief, that he would, for prudential reasons, be unable to appear in the delicate matter of bringing his daughter under my surveillance.

"The poor dear man came three times, shut up close in a four-wheeler, and darting into the house as soon as the door was opened, as though he wished to avoid being seen by the neighbours; and each time he came he seemed to be more excited and distressed. He said that he would come again early this morning."

"U-m!" I grunted. "Then he would best be quick about it, for I am leaving for a holiday on the Continent, at eleven o'clock."

"Ethelbert!" cried my aunt again looking at me sternly; "do you mean to tell me that you would deliberately run off to the Continent, on a mere holiday, too,

when a dean—with such connections!—is insisting on getting your services, no doubt for some distinguished patient? I notice several significant seals on the letters which have come for you. Now, don't be a goosey and throw away these valuable opportunities! Since when have you felt that you required a holiday? It was my impression, that what you stood most in need of was—patients!”

“Quite right, too,” I answered; “but, my dear aunt, I have the honour to advise you that the case of a distinguished member of the nobility has been placed in my hands, and I am going to the Continent in order to prepare myself for treating my noble patient. You will mention this to no one, please.”

I obtained immediate absolution, Aunt Eunice bestowing her usual kiss of peace upon me, and then going off about her household affairs. It was not later than half after nine when the dean arrived, and I received him in my private office where I purposely had placed my luggage and other evidences of having been caught just on the point of leaving to catch my train. My first look at the poor dean, however, shook my resolution to show brusqueness. I could hardly believe the worn and anxious man before me was the same as the suave and punctillious ecclesiastic who had so amused me a fortnight before. All the air of professional distress was gone, and I beheld simply a father's heart torn by genuine human grief and alarm respecting his child. Even the smooth, purring voice was changed;

and I could see that the unctuous self-consciousness which had become second nature to the cleric, had been swept away by the force of his present terribly real sorrow and shame.

"I am aware, Mr. Croft, that you were good enough to go down to Ackerby on Saturday last—to no avail, alas!" he began when we were seated facing one another.

"Yes," I replied, "it was unfortunate that Lady Torbeth left the castle only an hour or two before dinner, when I was counting upon meeting her ladyship. May I ask if she went to Dunchester, and if you suppose that her rather unexpected departure from Ackerby was due to the fact that she may in some way have got an inkling of my purpose in being at the castle?"

"Alas, no," answered the dean sorrowfully, "Lady Torbeth did not come to the deanery, nor could she have got any possible intimation of the object of your visit to the castle. The fact is, sir, that I deceived you the other day—or rather, I should say, I failed to be as explicit as you were careful to bid me be. Pray bear with an English gentleman's reticence, and a broken-hearted father's desire to shield his misguided child. I have now to advise you, sir, that Lady Torbeth's present whereabouts are unknown to both her parents and her husband—and—you will appreciate, sir, my sorrow and chagrin when I add, that we have only too good reason to believe that she has at last yielded to the fatal

infatuation which has been growing upon her for some time, and has joined——”

“Lord Ackerby?” I said boldly, desiring by one heroic thrust to cut to the heart of the matter, such cruelty being a recognised feature in the mercy of surgery.

My stratagem succeeded. With a look of immense relief the dean abandoned once for all the last semblance of reserve, and it was with the candour which alone could enable me to help him intelligently that he next spoke.

“I am aware that poor Lord Torbeth had a long conference with you, but at that time he himself knew nothing about the duke’s deplorable connection with the harrowing state of my wretched daughter’s mind. All room for distrust or reserve has now been removed—will you not, therefore, tell me frankly how you came by the knowledge which until late yesterday afternoon was known to no one on earth, as I thought, but myself?”

- “In my peculiar work,” I replied, “it is necessary that I take note of the slightest details, sir, and make tentative deductions from even the least substantial premises. I will meet your own with equal candour. I assure you, reverend sir, that I did not know of this painful fact regarding Lord Ackerby until the expression on your face just now corroborated the purely speculative surmise which I had formed within the past few days.”

"But, my dear sir," exclaimed the dean warmly, "when not even her own husband—to whom in her rational hours the viscountess is romantically attached—when, I say, not even her husband had any suspicions in this direction, how was it possible for you, a total stranger to Lady Torbeth, and, I believe, only a casual acquaintance of the duke, to reach this conclusion involving as it does the honour of a lady of whom you had never had any grounds for cherishing any but the most exalted respect?"

"It would be too long a story," I answered, "for me to state now by what process of analysis and deduction I was led to the true view of the situation, nor does this especially interest us at present. I am free to say, however, that I studied the duke—he is now my patient—and I also studied the duchess; also I met and closely observed Lord Torbeth and got from him an exceedingly exhaustive history of his wife's case; and lastly, I got, as you know, the benefit of Sir Porter Hope's opinion. All these together made the application of certain principles of reasoning easy enough. But, sir, I confess that I do not at all share your present hopeless view of this whole distressing matter."

The dean looked at me with consternation.

"Not share my view of the situation, sir?" he cried. "My God, sir, what can you mean? Lady Torbeth has for some time been the victim of an infatuation for this man—though not, she maintains, when she is properly herself, but when an invading and inimical

personality other than her own takes possession of her; she suddenly disappeared from the castle on Saturday evening, and early the next morning the duke also left the castle, filled at the time with his guests, and I got word that they were seen together in a cab in Chelsea at about noon yesterday; and now when I express my horror and shame over this tragedy, you inform me that you do not share my view of the matter! Most extraordinary position, sir, really!"

"Well, you see, sir," I answered quietly, "even in your own orthodox philosophy, whatever Lady Torbeth may do while suffering from hallucination or under the influence of an unsound mind, cannot be condemned as sinful, however deplorable it may be as a fact. Furthermore, it is my present impression that we have nothing to fear from Lord Ackerby who, in my very positive opinion, is far from being a blackguard, weak though he may be. But these two considerations are not the whole nor the weightier part of my reason for refusing to regard the situation as hopeless. No, sir. I am convinced by what Lord Torbeth and Sir Porter both told me, that Lady Torbeth presents the most intensely interesting proof of the utter falsity of the accepted theory as to personality—wait, sir, if you please—and I have the very great pleasure to inform you that, if you, sir, will but rise above the preconceptions and traditions of our erroneous teaching, you may be able both to rescue your unhappy daughter and forever to emancipate your own mind from the

horrible nightmare of the current belief as to the soul, the will, the individual, and the whole question of moral responsibility."

When I stopped, the dean looked at me as if unable to believe his ears. I sat perfectly unmoved and waited for him to say whatever might be in his mind.

"I need scarcely say, sir," he replied stiffly, "that if I comprehend the drift of your remarks, I am constrained to confess that I cannot at all reconcile your extraordinary views with the plain teaching of Christianity or, I might say—ah—ah—with sanity. As a clergyman of the Established Church I could not of course countenance any theories and still less any line of conduct not based upon the principles of revealed religion and—ah—ah—common sense."

"I feared that you would take that view, sir," I replied with studied composure. "Very good, sir. As a clergyman of the Established Church you feel bound to sacrifice your daughter's happiness, her good name, her very life perhaps, rather than look bravely into the one only possible system of truth capable of explaining her true condition and saving her from ruin. As a clergyman of the Established Church you feel bound to go on teaching a philosophy of life which has reduced man to his present pitiable state of abject slavery to certain tyrant errors, and which, had you but the moral courage to do what I ask, would shortly appear to you in all of its hideous nakedness. I had

hoped, sir, that the providential coincidence of Lady Torbeth's unique experience coming just at this particular juncture would lead to the most stupendous results; but the accident of her father being a clergyman of course necessitates her being sacrificed on the altar of prejudice, and once more truth must be crucified by those whose boast is that they are its heaven-appointed emissaries!"

I had feared a great show of indignation at this, but to my surprise the dean listened patiently and when I finished my harangue he seemed to be groping for my exact meaning.

"I ignore your strictures upon the reverend clergy," he said then with commendable dignity and calmness; "but, sir, while I say once more that I cannot countenance that which I believe to be contrary to the teachings of the Church and to reason, I do not wish to condemn as such views which, I confess, are but vaguely known to me as yet. Plainly, then, sir, what is it that you would have me do in order to save my child?"

The tremour in the father's voice as he said this completely silenced my last feeling of contempt for the priest, and I began to cherish the hope that, with tact, I might even yet get his love for his child to overcome the prejudices of his profession long enough to allow me at least to undertake the case.

"I ask merely, sir," I answered, "that you meet one Doctor Yznaga, the most profound thinker and able

specialist in psychology that ever lived. He is, by another significant coincidence, now in London. I have already consulted him on this matter, at the viscount's request. Yznaga would be only too glad to elucidate his theory of human life, and to outline for your benefit the proposed line of treatment. In that treatment, I implore you to believe, lies your daughter's sole hope of deliverance. Will you not at least meet this marvellous man? I was on the point of leaving for a fortnight on the Continent when you came in. I will postpone my departure, if you will appoint an hour when you will receive Doctor Yznaga. He is at present living in retirement at Maidenhead."

The dean thought for a moment or two, and then said: "It were tempting Providence to refuse to avail oneself of whatever offers itself as a possible help. I will see this man, then. It might be best also that I see him at his own house—servants are so inquisitive, you know, and those of her grace the Duchess of Marklemead at whose house in Mayfair I always stop when I am in town—I may state that I came up this time under royal command to preach at Court—her grace's servants, I was going to say, are no doubt like all the rest, so that the visit of this foreign gentleman might lead to embarrassing rumours affecting me, more particularly if he were recognised as the author of heterodox views, you know."

I almost laughed aloud. The ecclesiastic was reasserting himself after his temporary banishment by the

simple human father; so I cut the interview short, and the dean left me with the understanding that we were to meet at the Athenæum club for dinner that evening at six, and go thence to Maidenhead. Then I started out to try to find the duke.

CHAPTER X

NEITHER at his town house nor his club did I find Lord Ackerby. At each place I was told that his grace had gone down to the castle where the usual week-end house-party was being entertained. At one other place I might either find him or get word of him—the very private lodgings in Jermyn-street, to which the duke occasionally retired during a period of convalescence after a slight indiscretion. I had been called to this place of repentance and headache twice before, so that Perker, the duke's confidential man—a rare casuist and diplomat—would not resent my present invasion. I confess that I counted certainly on finding the duke himself in the Jermyn-street lodgings, for I could not bring myself to believe that the good dean's worst fears were well founded.

I had from my first meeting with Lord Ackerby perceived that he was an emotional, sentimental, weak-willed boy whom twenty years of wedded life had turned into a self-indulgent, restless, embittered and disappointed man drifting from hour to hour toward each new object that caught his fancy or that aroused his desire. That he was weak was manifest; but that he was base I could not get myself to admit. Lord Torbeth had not talked to me fifteen minutes about his

wife before I recognised the fact that that lady bore more than one mark of resemblance to my fascinating if demoralised duke. She was, her husband said, emotional, and unable to lay hold upon tangible happiness, because she was constantly haunted by visions of a greater happiness lying just beyond her reach; she was by turns pious and morbidly religious, mystical and æsthetic, passionate and animal; and, continued her calm and philosophic husband, none of these women is the woman whom I married.

From much else that the harassed husband told me and from what I myself had observed and heard when attending the Duke of Ackerby, I soon put two and two together and reached the conclusion that it was the latter of whom the viscountess in her excursions into new psychological states had begun to think in a way that alarmed her friends. But even after the poor dean had reported the circumstantial evidence pointing to an elopement I did not believe that any such tragic explanation would prove to be correct. My own belief was that these two unsatisfied ones were drawn toward each other, not by any personal attraction that either exerted on the other, but merely by their common hunger for the same nameless satisfaction. Just as in mathematics, things which are equal to the same thing are equal to each other, so also in metaphysics they who incline toward the same thing incline toward each other. Nowhere else so potently as in the romantic soul does misery love company; and it is because

consolation is so insidious that "a little widow is a dangerous thing."

Yes. I had confidently expected to find Lady Torbeth suffering from an aching void, and was prepared also to find that she had come to think that in the duke's wistful and wasted and hungered life lay that which would serve as the theme for her swan song—the epic of the emotionally denied ones, *What Might Have Been*. But, really, I was not in the least prepared to find the duke quite up to the exertion and discomfort and bad form of an actual elopement, nor Lady Torbeth, of whom such a husband as hers had spoken in such a way as he spoke to me, daring or desiring to make that fateful leap for life, so likely to prove short of the farther bank, from which farther bank moreover, there is no returning—for the woman!

It was with decidedly mixed feelings and forecastings, therefore, that I made my way to the one more place where I could hope to hear of Lord Ackerby's doings. Old Perker admitted me, and I saw at a glance that his master was within, for the cautious valet evidently seemed to think that I had come in response to a summons, and led me upstairs saying in a whisper, that "'is gryce were hawful bad in the night, but h'easier now."

"Oh, I say, you know, you did come jolly quick, didn't you just?" groaned the duke when I sat down by the couch on which I found him lying in his dressing-gown and with his head wrapped in towels.

"Why, did you send for me, my lord?" I asked laughing at his look of misery.

"Chuck your chaffing! It hurts me like the devil to laugh. And, I say, Croft, you and Torbeth cut, didn't you?—can't blame you either! Rum, wasn't it, the castle, with that giddy old countess making everybody climb those beastly mountains with her? I cut, too, you know, later—only I came up to town on a bit of damned ugly business, and it's that that I want to talk to you about now," grunted and hiccupped his grace, making an unsuccessful effort to impress me with his perfect sobriety.

"Wouldn't it perhaps be better to wait until—well, until I can get you asleep for a while? You are nervous, and a bit of sleep will make you as fit as ever. Let's see, that dose of bromide did the trick the other morning neatly, didn't it?" I said as I felt his pulse which was decidedly off.

"Right you are, but wait a bit, you know, until I unload what is on my mind. Wanted to send for you last night, but somehow I couldn't think of your name Funny thing, that—not to be able to think of a chap's name, isn't it? Well, now, Croft, I came to town to meet Lady Torbeth, you know, and she——"

"Oh," I broke in, "please don't talk until we have got some of the alcohol out of your brain. Seriously, my lord, I really cannot allow you to discuss the viscountess just now."

"The deuce, you say! By Jove, man, if we wait until

I am sober, I shan't remember half of it, you know! No, sir! *In vino veritas*—so here goes! Just see if anybody is in the passage, will you?"

I went to the door and pretended to make a reconnoissance in the passage.

"Nobody there now, but there is no telling who may be there at any moment, in lodgings, you know," I argued, not very sincerely, for I knew that Perker would not permit any trespassing on his proprietary territory. "So you would really much better have a little sleep now. I'll stop here until you wake, and then we can go to your grace's club where we can talk more comfortably."

"No, sir, not for the world. Why, good lord, Croft, what the devil do you imagine that I am going to say to you? You look all of a blue funk. Lady Torbeth—by the bye, you did not meet her, after all, did you? Deucedly clever woman, the viscountess—yes, and devilishly apt to go off at half cock, damme! Well, she telegraphed me to come up to town yesterday morning—something desperate the matter, she said; so of course I came, though I must say, I did not quite fancy doing so while Torbeth himself was under my roof, you know. But Lady Torbeth does not say things are beastly rum when they are not, so up I came to town as she bade me. She was at Lady Brannoldene's house, and she made me take her pretty well over these islands looking for a certain beastly foreign chap of whom somebody had told her—awfully tangent, you know, Lady

Torbeth—and she felt that she must see this old Spaniard without Torbeth knowing anything about it. Well, we cabbed it to Chelsea, and then she said she was afraid that it was Chiswick where he lived. We cabbed it to Chiswick, and then she said she thought it must be Putney. At Putney she said she remembered that it was Richmond, which it wasn't; for we finally ran the old beggar to earth in Maidenhead—at half-past nine at night! So we found the old chap anyhow—looks like a cardinal off his luck, or like Savonarola gone to seed, or Faust before his deal with the devil, you know. I did not like the snuffy old party, I confess; but the viscountess had a two-hours' *seance* with him in a sort of iron dog kennel in the garden, and when she came out she said that she had never met anybody like him—guess that's true, too!—and that now she would soon be fit again. God grant she may, for I don't mind telling you, Croft, as my medical adviser, things between us were getting deucedly bad. I'd die before I would consciously play false to Torbeth, but—but—good God, man, you saw the hell I live in—you know me—you realise that a chap like me must live, must feel, must possess—and that I—I——”

Always as demonstrative as a schoolgirl, when alcohol swam through his veins, Lord Ackerby was an exposed nerve, and emotion played at will over his mind and showed itself with piteous frankness on his face. He fairly broke down now and cried hysterically as he grasped my hand. But even as I sat and tried to calm

him I could not help congratulating myself on the way my diagnosis was being proved correct by each word and act of the neurotic wreck beside me.

"And do you happen to know, my lord, where Lady Torbeth is now, and whether or not she stopped at Lady Brannoldene's last night?" I asked when the duke had calmed down once more and I had done what I could to reassure him.

"Most certainly," he replied, raising himself upon his elbow and speaking with emphasis. "The viscountess returned to Brannoldene House direct from Maidenhead, and she stopped there over night. Wish I knew where I spent the night!—club, I fancy. Lady Torbeth went to Paris this morning at eleven o'clock. Tell Torbeth how it all was, for God's sake, won't you?"

I left him sound asleep, and hurried to the nearest post-office whence I sent a telegram to the dean which must have greatly rejoiced the worthy man; and then I went home, thinking over the new turn which the rapidly-moving situation had taken.

I received a jubilant reply from the dean expressing his thankfulness to heaven—and me—for the good news contained in my message. Then I hunted up Lord Torbeth, finding him at Tredwell's studio, and I had the happiness to tell him that his wife had already placed herself under Yznaga's treatment, and that she had gone to Paris, doubtless at his suggestion. The viscount took this information with his customary

calmness, making no comment upon his wife's erratic movements, but merely writing Yznaga's address and that of de Moulin and Freycinet, in his notebook. Having thus set at rest the immediate fears of those most deeply concerned in my new and elusive patient, I went about my regular afternoon work with impatient anticipations of the meeting in the evening between the dean and the philosopher. I had only too good reason to fear that the results of that meeting would be most important.

CHAPTER XI

MY visits all paid, I hurried home for a quiet cup of tea with Aunt Eunice and a good long hour with my pipe, in which to formulate the questions through which I proposed to draw from Yznaga the light which the dean so desperately needed. But, alas, on turning into my street I saw that a pretentious equipage was standing before my door, and I smiled as I thought how happy Aunt Eunice must be trying to hold on to some aristocratic patient until I should arrive. Nobody was in my office on the ground floor, however, and as I heard voices and other indications that tea was being served I stole up stairs intending to slip by the drawing-room and so pass up to my own room. But my aunt spied me and called me. There was of course no escape now, so I went into the drawing-room where two fashionably gowned women were effusively reducing poor Aunt Eunice to a state of perpetual smirk and silence, and industriously drinking her tea, which, though I say it who shouldn't, cannot be surpassed anywhere.

"Well, well, well, my dear Croft—to think that when we now meet again for the first time in years you should be famous! I was just saying to your charming aunt, however, that if you find that a lot of people will begin

to take you up now that you are all the rage, you can't say that I waited for others to recognise you before I appreciated you, can you? No!"

I had not seen Mrs. Deniston since the winter that she spent in Vienna where her husband was ambassador for the brief period just before his tragic death; and she was certainly the last person whom I expected to find sipping tea and gossiping with my aunt. By nature a woman of extraordinarily bright mind, her immense fortune and the cosmopolitan life she had led as the wife of a great diplomat at foreign courts had combined to make Mrs. Deniston quite the most finished woman of the world and resourceful social strategist whom I had ever known. Her amazing directness and naive indifference to the lubricating tactics of society were attributed by her enemies to the "Brummagem" taint in her blood—she was an iron-monger's daughter; but her blissful lack of tact amounted, as a matter of fact, to an exquisitely effective substitute for that rarest of graces, and she frequently carried by sheer good-will positions against which the finer blade of diplomacy would have been useless. She was genuine! And she bore the proof of this divine trait writ large on her forehead. Full of real sympathies she made one feel at one's ease, and with her delightful faculty for making one—everyone—at home, she possessed also the much rarer power to convince one of the sincerity of her welcome and the honesty of her seeming wish to listen to one's talk. People

expected to be shocked now and then by Mrs. Deniston's abruptness and by her complacent acceptance of the world as it is; but they also expected to find pretty well everybody worth meeting, at her house. Her friendships were not the less ardent by being called legion, and, as I had had reason to know, in fighting the battles of her friends, and in defending their good name single handed against the world she was a veritable host in herself. I attended the Ambassador during his dying hours, and his wife always declared afterward, that if the day ever should come when she could do me a service, I would hear from her. That day had apparently arrived—and so had she! She would, I felt sure, assist me in London by her enthusiastic allusions to my supposed skill; but it was for another reason that I rejoiced on finding her drinking tea so comfortably with my aunt in my own drawing-room—she would be certain to let me come to her house, and this meant that I was now in the way of meeting the people I most desired to meet, especially the foreign members of the diplomatic circle. Mrs. Deniston was welcome!

"This is indeed a pleasure!" I exclaimed, "and a surprise, my dear Mrs. Deniston, for Monteith told me only the other day, that you were still in India. If I had dreamed——"

"Yes, yes! I know!" broke in Mrs. Deniston in her breezy way. "You were going to say, that you would have called, et cetera, et cetera—as though I did not know you of old, and that one has to scheme for weeks

to capture you even for a little dinner! But you see, I forgave you and looked you up! I wanted to come and have a look at the latest lion in his den, and also because I want very much to have you meet a dear friend. Muriel, my dear, let me present Doctor Croft."

I turned to meet the woman who sat on the little sofa back of the angle formed by the piano and the wall. She acknowledged the introduction by a slight inclination of her strikingly well-poised head, and then dropped her eyes and devoted her attention to her tea. I was sure that I had never seen her before, but the appeal made to my mind by her sad, wistful, and altogether unusual face was quite the strongest and strangest ever made by any face. To an absurd degree the woman interested me instantaneously; nor could I have said why. On turning again I observed that Aunt Eunice was making excited efforts to communicate some secret intelligence to me, but, as she afterwards declared, "just like a man," I failed to interpret the meaning of her elevated eyebrows and significant but mystifying glances. She was, therefore, obliged to adopt other measures for my enlightenment.

"I think, Mrs. Deniston," she said apologetically and continuing to work her eyebrows ineffectually at me, "that you did not mention Miss Errington's name when you presented my nephew."

I started. Aunt Eunice detected this, and it was her turn now to be mystified, for she wondered why the name of the lady should strike me so oddly. She still

had her bit of revelation to impart, so that my agitation came as an anti-climax.

"Bless me! I'll be forgetting my own name next!" cried Mrs. Deniston laughing. "Well, Croft, my dear fellow, this is Muriel Errington whom I want you to know as well as I know her—so, when can you dine with me to meet her? To-night week?"

I stammered something about having to run off to the Continent; I was thinking of nothing but this beautiful woman who was rapidly becoming a decidedly unaccountable influence in my life.

"I'm sure, Miss Errington, that you are the lady who waited here so long the other day, and whom I had the pleasure of meeting for a moment—when you wouldn't accept a cup of tea," chirped Aunt Eunice not to be done out of her chance to explode her little bomb of surprise for my benefit, and looking with the expectancy of a child to see the effect of her words on me.

The effect was marked and immediate—on all of us! Mrs. Deniston shot a look of curious suspicion at Miss Errington which greatly impressed me; I myself paid my compliments to my aunt with a look intended to convey my opinion of old ladies who talk too much and who say egregiously ill-timed things; but it was Miss Errington who had heard poor blundering Aunt Eunice's innocent little statement with the greatest surprise.

"I?" she exclaimed with transparent sincerity and a crushingly manifest truthfulness which utterly dumbfounded Aunt Eunice and me. "Why, Miss Croft,

you are quite mistaken I assure you, for I was never here before in my life. I must have an astral double who appears at all sorts of places, for lately no end of people have been telling me that they saw me here, there, and everywhere."

She laughed so genuinely at this that there could be absolutely no doubt of her entire sincerity. Aunt Eunice apologised for her mistake, and then settled back to study the amazing likeness—and to question the woman's word; but I had heard Miss Errington's protest with infinite relief. I now knew absolutely that in some inexplicable but merciful way she had forgotten! Her repeated attempts to attract my attention in the theatre that night, and her perilous outbreak of passion on that other night when she had flung herself upon me—all was erased from her memory, thank God! Mrs. Deniston came to the relief of the somewhat awkward situation by saying something about nobody ever being able to confound Miss Errington with anyone else after hearing her voice; and the conversation drifted away again into inconsequent nothings.

Soon I had Miss Errington to myself, and we were deep in music when Mrs. Deniston rose and said they really must be off as they had two or three other places to drop in at before dinner. What shall I say of the effect of that half hour with the singular woman whom destiny had again and again brought into my life? That I had suddenly and madly fallen in love I will certainly not admit, but that this woman was interest-

ing and absorbing above all women I now knew in my soul—and the thought was like wine in my blood.

"Well!" cried Aunt Eunice when they were gone, "did you ever hear of such a striking resemblance? Why, my dear fellow, even if one might be easily deceived by the face, surely that remarkable voice can not, as that extraordinary Mrs. Deniston said, be so easily confused with any other. I tell you, sir, it was Miss Errington, or else her ghost who waited here for you that day for two mortal hours. Oh! here is a note which Mrs. Deniston told me in a mysterious whisper to give to you after they had left. I hate mystery—but *do* see if it throws any light on this most extraordinary coincidence."

I laughed at Aunt Eunice and called her a foolish old woman, and then tore open Mrs. Deniston's little note. It was short, and I told my aunt that it was merely the address of a patient; but the next instant I was jumping into a cab and driving as fast as possible to Park Lane. I reached Mrs. Deniston's door a moment only after she had entered it, and presently I was closeted with her discussing the subject of her note—Miss Errington.

"But from all that you have told me of her I confess that I do not see the force of your argument, my dear Mrs. Deniston," I said when she finished a long account of her acquaintance with her remarkable young friend. "You have simply described a woman of perhaps unusual but not necessarily unnatural or abnormal

nervous make-up—hysteria is, I assure you, not as uncommon to-day as it was when you were Miss Errington's age. But, really you know, there is nothing in all this to indicate insanity, and still less mania of the horrible character of which you hinted a moment ago. You are a woman of uncommon sense; tell me now honestly, what have you been keeping back? If I am to undertake this case, you will understand that I must be put into possession of all the facts."

I was careful to keep back a number of facts myself—for example, Mrs. Deniston did not know of her friend's visit to my house, nor that it was I whom she met at the undesirable club; my object being to get from her a perfectly frank statement of everything she knew of the matter. My appeal to her common sense was effectual.

"Well, then, my dear Croft," she went on without further hesitation, "I know that you will put no unkind or illogical interpretation on anything that I may say. You also know that I am the last woman in the world to take an uncharitable or narrow view of another woman's conduct. I have lived abroad. I have seen a little of the world. In short, I know what an insufferable old hypocrite and scandal-monger the British matron really is, and that, if I don't stand by poor Muriel now she may speedily be hurled to ruin by these virtuous vultures of good society. So I shall make a clean breast of it all. To one's medical man one can say some things which it might be indelicate to say

to anyone else. Now as I tell you what I in sorrow and anxiety feel that I must tell you, pray do try to remember all the good things I have told you of that truly superb girl whom I love as I do my own daughter, and who must be saved by—you!”

There was a most unusual tremor about Mrs. Deniston's lips as she spoke: this sudden catastrophe threatening to overwhelm a woman whom she loved was now revealing depths of character in her which I had believed to exist but had never seen stirred until now; so I said a few simple words of hope and cheeriness, and she proceeded.

“For some time Muriel has been in the habit of dropping in to see me whenever she felt restless or unhappy at home, and some times she would stop with me for a week. I understand her, and she feels that I do not harass her with vexatious questions when one of her moods is coming on. Until lately I thought no more of these moods than that they were evidences of a run down nervous system—and, between ourselves, evidences also of growing misunderstanding and friction at home. But very recently I have been forced to believe that her trouble is a much more serious one. I took her to see you in order to have the way opened for you to come to see her without arousing her suspicions. As you saw, it is almost impossible to think that that brilliant and astonishingly acute woman is insane; but, my dear doctor, if I do not consider her mad, I shall be compelled to believe her—immoral!”

I showed surprise, and Mrs. Deniston went on with considerable embarrassment.

"Yes. If the wretched girl is not out of her head, she has suddenly developed positively dreadful tendencies. But let me speak freely. On the night of poor Sir Arkell Mostyn's death—you must have read that he died suddenly at the close of a performance at the theatre—Miss Errington lied to me and said that she was returning home, but several people told me that she was in a box at the Three Feathers with an elderly foreigner of distinguished appearance. I spoke to her of this, and she broke down and cried. She said that the old gentleman had merely invited her into his box when she was unable to get a stall; but that another man—an Englishman sitting in the stalls—had exercised a mysterious influence over her, and that she had thereupon purposely tried to attract his attention by looking fixedly at him all during the evening. Well, now, she has since admitted to me that she knows who this man is, but she naturally refuses to tell me either his name or whether or not she has made any effort to meet him. My own horrible fear is, however, that she has made such an effort, and that she has met this blackguard repeatedly. Oh, my dear friend, don't, don't think me shockingly indelicate or still less unkind in speaking in this way, will you?"

"But surely, you must be mistaken, or at any rate jumping to conclusions at once illogical and unhappy?"

I answered with calmness which I remember with considerable pride.

"Alas, no!" she protested. "The other night things came to the most terrifying sort of a crisis. Muriel spent the whole afternoon away, and when she returned just in time for dinner I noticed that she was very much excited and restless. Pleading headache she left us in the drawing-room about ten o'clock, but one of the maids told me that she saw Miss Errington go into the little cloak-room where our telephone is, and that she stopped there at least a quarter of an hour. At half after ten I myself went up to Muriel's room, and found her in bed. I sat with her for a moment and then kissed her good-night and left her go to sleep. You may imagine my alarm when my maid woke me at midnight to tell me that Miss Errington had just returned—in full evening dress—and seemed to be ill. I rushed up to her room on the third story, and found the poor girl in a state of remorse and bewilderment piteous to see. She fell into a troubled sleep soon after I got her in bed, and talked incoherently half the night through about having gone—you will pardon my mentioning this, will you not?—having gone to a certain place of very questionable repute, as I afterwards learned. It was plain to my mind, therefore, that the poor child had met the scoundrel who is availing himself of her singular fascination, to ruin her. And now, what in the name of God am I to do? I alone know of all this, and

I feel consequently that the responsibility rests upon me. Help me!"

What my thoughts were as Mrs. Deniston spoke may well be imagined. My first impulse was, of course, to quash the whole indictment against Miss Errington by declaring myself to be the man who, it was feared, was dragging her down to destruction; but this would have been to place myself in a false light without establishing the woman's innocence—unless I should tell the whole story, and this would merely prove that Miss Errington had suffered nothing at my hands, but that it was she who had flung herself at me and implored me to meet her at a place of which I had never so much as heard until she spoke of it. By announcing my connection with the ugly affair all that I could do would be to establish the unfortunate woman's innocence as far as I was concerned. She would still remain one who had in a moment of uncontrollable passion procured a meeting with a stranger at a place of which she should have known nothing and could have known nothing good. So I determined to try to dispell Mrs. Deniston's gravest fears without making a full confession.

"As a woman of the world," I argued, "you must know, Mrs. Deniston, that there are different ways of looking at things. In London as in every great capital there are certain places—restaurants, concert halls, clubs—where one is sure to see both men and women of bad character; but it by no means follows that everyone whom one may see there is necessarily not respect-

able. On the Continent, as you know, one does not ask what the morals of one's neighbours in a restaurant may be, nor bother about anybody's conduct save his own. Here, I confess, matters are different; but even in London we are cosmopolitan enough to live and let live and to avoid making uncharitable inferences from what we may chance to see in public places. Admitting that our friend did meet a gentleman at some place frequented by undesirable persons, surely you are not the woman to believe that all this involves anything worse than indiscretion due to nervous strain—come now!”

“Ah! how I wish that I could feel about it as you say I should,” replied Mrs. Deniston sadly; “but it is quite impossible, my dear fellow. Again I must beg you will forgive me for alluding to such things, but in order to get you to understand my own alarm I must speak plainly. Poor Muriel was weak enough to meet this man, whoever he may be, at a most disreputable establishment known as the *Cercle Potocka*. If you happen to know of the place, you must share my distress.”

“I have never been in the place, but I regret to have to say that I hear that it is indeed what you state. However, what do you really know about Miss Errington's movements on the night in question? She left your house; later she talked in her sleep about this place. Now, I ask, may it not be the truth, that she went to the club, but on hearing what its reputation was, she

refused to enter the place? Her subsequent agitation might very naturally be the result of her distress on finding that she had come so near to being placed in a compromising position. Then, too, Mrs. Deniston, are you quite fair in damning and double damning this unknown chap who has had the misfortune of becoming the unconscious cause of the lady's hysterical infatuation? I for one incline to the belief that any English gentleman within the widest stretch of that elastic term would die rather than play upon a mad woman's emotional weakness. Come, now, can't we take a wholly more cheerful view of the whole matter? I think we can."

"Alas!" replied Mrs. Deniston with an abandonment of her customary optimism which amazed me, "I fear that we can not. She and the man were seen coming out of the unsavory establishment."

"Impossible!" I exclaimed with rapidly growing heat and forgetting my policy of keeping myself out of the matter.

"She was not recognised, but the man was," said Mrs. Deniston to my final undoing.

"Then, how in the name of God do you know that it was she?" I asked hotly.

"Because the man later spoke of having been with Miss Errington. Oh, it's all too dreadfully true, my dear friend, too dreadfully, horribly true!"

I was too deeply stung by some one's malice to even care to make an effort just then to clear up the miser-

able muddle; but I did assure Mrs. Deniston that I still believed absolutely in Miss Errington's innocence as well as in the honour of her unknown victim, and I hurried home to change for dinner in a dangerous frame of mind. On my way to the Athenæum club where I was to dine with Dean Chelmsford I sent a rather peremptory telegram to Tredwell asking him to meet me at my own club at midnight. That he could have mentioned the escapade in which he acted as my confidential adviser I could not force myself to think, but if he did not, who did? I had been recognised, Mrs. Deniston had said, and nothing now was needed to complete the web of a scandal likely enough to prove highly diverting at the very outset of my career, but that the name of the beautiful woman who was seen with me should become known. If Tredwell had failed me, he would give me an accounting; but—this I was sure was the case—if he had not proved a traitor, he would prove an invaluable friend in helping me to run the rumour to earth. Then I drove the whole matter out of my mind, and went in to dine on platitudes and—ah—ah—stuffed veal with the dean.

CHAPTER XII

It was quite late when we reached Maidenhead, but we found Doctor Yznaga waiting with much ceremony to receive us, and without loss of time I stated the objects of the dean's visit and begged my old friend to elucidate his theory of Lady Torbeth's case and to outline his proposed method of treatment. During his long harangue I sat silently watching the face of the dean. It was a study. At times it was evident that the cautious and conventional ecclesiastic really believed that he was listening to the ravings of a lunatic. Again, under the spell of the old Spaniard's poetic imagination instinct with tender feeling, the dean showed signs of difficulty in resisting the fascination of errors which, by every principle of his official self, he must necessarily denounce as blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits, as per the Thirty-Nine Articles.

Perhaps the sapient reader who tosses aside this book as being a mass of preposterous absurdities, may be able to appreciate the learned dean's feelings on hearing what he considered the very axioms of existence denied *in toto*, and the whole subject of human life discussed from a point of view so distinctly disrespectful to the Established Church. My greatest regret is, that the reader can not share with the worthy dean the


privilege of hearing the truth from the lips of its greatest expounder himself, but at second hand from me.

"But, sir," remonstrated the dean when Yznaga paused after formally defining "personality" and what constitutes an individual, "this is—ah—ah—you will permit me to be perfectly frank, I am sure—this is—ah—ah—most extraordinary, sir—in fact, I might even say monstrous, really!"

"In what way?" asked the doctor smiling quietly at me.

"Why, my dear sir, such a definition of personality quite does away with all individual existence. You, I am sure, can not expect me to admit the non-existence of the human soul—of my own personal, rational, responsible self!" replied the dean smirking.

"Slowly, if you please, very reverend sir, slowly! If we are to get within intelligible distance of each other there must be no begging of the question, no slipshod use of terms, no attempt to evade the logical deductions. If you reject any of my statements of fact, well and good, and in that case you will of course also reject my conclusions as well; but if, on the contrary, you are forced to admit any of my facts, I give you fair warning, sir, that I shall not allow you to brush aside their logical inferences as though logic had no sovereign authority over your intellect. I was about to show, when you stopped me, that this combination of brain cells and nerve centres being physical only, is subject to alteration under purely physical changes, so that



the 'soul' or character or whatever you choose to call the individual, is obviously affected by whatever affects the brain. In fact, sir, you have as many 'souls' as you have changes of mental condition, and it follows that I can 'damn' or 'save' you with nothing more than a suitable use of nitrogen, phosphates, protein, electricity, and above all, vibratory control. I shock you, sir?"

"Unspeakably! This is really beyond belief, monstrous—ah—ah—awful!"

"But wait a moment, reverend sir! You admit, I suppose, that this alleged morally responsible ghost of yours—your 'rational soul'—does at times enjoy relief from those terrifying responsibilities which you theologians hang over our heads. For example, a baby may steal, or lie, or commit any sort of sin within its power, without incurring guilt. Again, an idiot, or a lunatic, or any sleeping person, or the victim of certain drugs, may do wrong, but you gentlemen kindly extend your amnesty to such exempt ones, and to that extent dethrone the 'responsible Ego,' reducing that autocrat to a mere irresponsible instrument in the hands of external physical forces operating upon his brain machinery. Well, sir, do you doubt that science can so treat your brain as that you also can be rid of responsibility? Certainly not. You can not question the fact that science can vitally affect your brain, and by your own admission certain conditions of the brain have the effect of relieving a man of the taint of 'sin' and of

all the penalties attached to it. So far so good. I maintain that every thought of a man, whether it issues from a waking or sleeping, a normal or abnormal, a healthy or diseased brain, is nothing more nor less than the inevitable output of the existing cerebral conditions. The way to save men, therefore, is to treat their brains scientifically so that they shall produce only the best attainable thought-product. You would cry shame were a lunatic or a somnambulist or an infant to be hanged for murder. I go further, and cry shame, sir, and outrage, when I behold any man held accountable for the outcome of the grey matter in his skull. You and I agree, that under certain conditions 'personality' is not your high and mighty responsible Ego, but simply a highly complex organism capable of secreting such thoughts and of inducing such acts only as may result from the pressure of circumstances external to itself. As I have just shown you, babies and idiots and hypnotic subjects manage to get quit of this poor troubled responsible soul and do as they are made to do by circumstances, without having to suffer the pangs of conscience here nor the tortures of hell hereafter. I maintain that all men should be quit of it also."

"Really, you know," stammered the dean when Yznaga stopped, "this is really—ah—ah—really!"

The good man was too dumbfounded to speak for some moments after making this general protest, and when he did regain his composure sufficiently to proceed he did so with the not very convincing statement,

that "you will scarcely expect me to acquiesce in your most extraordinary position, sir, really."

"And now as to morality," went on the old Spaniard urbanely, in spite of the dean's characteristically clerical inability to exempt the heretic from the wrath poured upon the heresy. "As to morality, reverend sir, I hold *that* to be a moral life which strives to develop within itself the most perfect harmony with the laws of health. Do you follow me, sir?"

"I take your meaning, sir, and of course reject it with horror," retorted the dean reddening, "for if there is no personal, responsible Ego, but a man is merely what physical conditions happen to make him from hour to hour, I should very much like you to tell me, to *what* is it within him that you would appeal to morally? You reduce man to a series of puppets following one another in the occupancy of the house of the brain—for all the world like a succession of tenants in a dwelling. Now, sir, may I venture to ask you, to which of these tenants would you offer salvation, which of them would you consider the moral agent? The resident to-day? Or the tenant whom he ousted yesterday? Or perhaps the new tenant of the brain who may oust him in turn to-morrow?"

The priest laughed loud at his clever point, and so did the philosopher; but the amusement of the latter was at the innocence of the former.

"I thank you, sir, for that very striking illustration," said Yznaga genially when the dean had had his laugh

out; "for it covers the point I was about to take up. Your simile of the successive tenants in the house of the brain is capital. You ask me, to which of these tenants I would offer salvation, which one I would wish to see permanently seized of the property? I would offer salvation, sir, to *the fittest to inhabit the stately premises!* I would do all in my power to dispossess all others. I would carry eviction at the point of the lancet and the electric battery! In fact, I have had the honour to take part in more than one such eviction and house-cleaning, sir!"

"Are you, sir, mad, or am I?" asked the dean seriously.

"Was St. Paul mad?" rejoined the old doctor smiling. "St. Paul distinctly tells us that he found a number of old tenants wrangling with the 'new man' who was trying to establish himself within him. And when at last he succeeded in suppressing the 'old man,' he declares that 'henceforth it is not I, but Christ within me!'"

"You are doubtless aware," replied the dean, "that the language of the Bible is largely figurative; and St. Paul was an exceptional man."

"Quite so," agreed Yznaga; "but not in this particular. The man has yet to live who is not conscious of a duality of wills within himself, a struggle, as it were, between different wills desirous of obtaining possession of the brain-throne. It will be the glorious function of the coming scientific moralist to determine

the validity of the title of the rival claimants of the lease. The physician of the future—after the theologians have finally lost the little that still remains of their once dominating influence—the physician of the future, sir, will have the sublime work of bringing the aid of science to the task of destroying all unfit, and of developing only fit tenants for the royal palace of the human mind.”

“And how, may I ask,” inquired the dean with no effort to conceal his contempt, “would you propose to manufacture by artificial means this fit tenant, as you, I must say, blasphemously call the immortal soul? In short, sir, what would you do in the case of the noble lady, my most unfortunate daughter? Speak plainly, sir, if you can.”

“I would simply treat the brain centres,” quickly replied Yznaga, rising and glowing with the zeal of an apostle and a lover of man. “I would do what is possible to eradicate the influences of memory and heredity. I would stimulate the centres secreting the emotions and thought-images which are desired; and control or suppress entirely other centres radiating undesirable images and impulses; and then I would excite to intense activity the centres radiating emotions and thoughts consistent with the sane and decent ‘Ego’ whom the lady elects shall be the rightful and permanent tenant of her brain. All this seems grossly materialistic, no doubt, to you, sir; but in view of the ghastly failure of your own philosophy to save the world, you might at least wish me success!”

"I can scarcely believe my ears, sir!" muttered the dean shaking his head sadly and looking incredulously at the quiet old man who sat peacefully twirling his thumbs opposite to him. "Is it possible that you really imagine that you can alleviate the pains of a sin-burdened conscience by treating the nerve centres, as you call them?"

"Not if 'sin' were what you fancy that it is—the deliberate act of a responsible agent in contravention of the arbitrary laws of an infinite and terrible god," replied Doctor Yznaga; "but as I know that 'sin' is merely the doing what seems desirable to a mind abnormally developed in an undesirable way, I do think—more, I am absolutely certain, sir, that relief can be got by removing or modifying the abnormal tendency, and stimulating the normal."

"But my God, sir!" exclaimed the dean rising and pacing back and forth, "do you not see that all this is tantamount to declaring that sin is only a disease of the brain? Heaven help the world when you have succeeded in doing away with the restraints of conscience and religion!"

"Whose conscience?" broke in Yznaga smiling. "Your conscience, or that of the Asiatic; mine, or that of the cannibal islander? You see, reverend sir, that this alleged conscience varies as much as all the other features of your mythical Ego, and is, in simple truth, nothing but the grip of previous generations—the mortgage long ago forged and now at last to be fought and for ever quashed—by ME!"

"But, sir," stormed the dean confronting the calm old thinker, "such madness must result in opening the flood-gates of license and vice and sin of every sort!"

"Whereas," retorted Yznaga, growing warm in his turn, "your beautiful moonshine teachings have done what for the world? Look at this world after your mortgage on the brain has remained unchallenged for thousands of years! It is filled with sorrow and suffering and tormenting dread. Why? Because your teaching has duped man into believing that his 'Ego'—who does not exist—will be eternally punished for the unsatisfactory working of the secretions of the brain which, since it does exist, may be repaired, or at any rate improved in its operation. Ah, God! for an opportunity to develop a race of healthy human creatures who know that happiness lies in a perfect conformity to law! No more bringing into the world of nervous wrecks; no more shrouding the beautiful truths of sex beneath the shameful and utterly ineffectual prudery of marriage, with the resultant horrors of secret and illicit sin and the everlasting torment of desire made unnatural by artificial and unscientific restrictions and false conditions; no more churches filled with cringing conscience-stricken creatures; no more homes and streets thronged with men and women madly pursuing they know not what, racked by hungers and fears and misgivings and questionings they know not why!"


"I see, sir," said the dean stiffly, "that it would be quite out of the question for a clergyman of the Estab-

lished Church to allow anyone in whom he was interested or over whom he could exert the slightest influence, to submit to treatment based upon the soul-destroying principles which you, sir, have dared to enunciate this evening. Mr. Croft, as there seems to be nothing further which I desire to ask this extraordinary person, I will beg you to have the goodness to see that a cab is fetched as speedily as possible."

Yznaga winked slyly at me, much enjoying the starched uneasiness of the pompous cleric. As Lady Torbeth herself had already placed her case in his hands, the old Spaniard could well afford to ignore the dean's sweeping *non possumus*—but he could not afford to forget that he was an old Spaniard and so one on whom the duties of hospitality rested with special force. Rising when the dean did, Doctor Yznaga exchanged his air of professional combativeness for that of a genial and courteous host of the old school.

"Ah, but you surely will not go, very reverend sir, until I have had the honour to offer you a glass of some rare old wine of Andalusia—its like could not be found in London, sir—and then we can part excellent friends, as grey-haired men always should. Do me the honour to come this way, reverend sir, and you also, my dear Croft."

He led the way into his quaint little house with so much antique grace and winning good nature that it was not in the polished Dean of Dunchester—an excellent judge of wine—to refuse.



CHAPTER XIII

DURING the long evening my mind had been so absorbed by the battle royal between the dean and the doctor that my eventful interview with Mrs. Deniston a few hours before lay more like an undefined anxiety in my sub-consciousness, than as the subject of active thought. When I said good-night to Yznaga, however, and started to keep my appointment with Tredwell at the club, the whole affair of Miss Errington flamed forth once more as the burning question confronting me. Her case, or rather, the little that I knew of it, was of course incomparably less interesting and important than that of Lady Torbeth; but my own interest in and relations with Lady Torbeth were merely professional, whereas, however much I might try to conceal the fact from my own mind, Miss Errington did interest me intensely, and unless I could obtain practical assistance and suggestion from Tredwell, she might prove to be very seriously and fatally associated with my destiny. At all events, by far the most beautiful woman I had ever seen had developed a passionate attachment for me; under the spell of her hysterical infatuation she had unwittingly placed herself and me in a most compromising position; I had been seen, and unless I could scotch the viper forthwith, who could say

what dire results might not follow? Luckily, Miss Errington was in the confidence of a woman like Mrs. Deniston, and I soon reached the determination to place the whole affair in the hands of that astute and loyal and resourceful friend.

It was with such thoughts and forebodings crowding through my head that I hastened from Maidenhead to the West End, and as good fortune befell, I overtook Tredwell in Piccadilly and we went on together to the club. The painter was as *blasé* and accommodating as ever, but not a little perplexed by the mystery, and amused by the peremptoriness of my telegram.

"By Jove, old chap," he began when we settled back into our leather arm-chairs with a properly supplied table between us, "at this rate the short, sad history of your life will do capitally for a great hit at the Adelphi. Talk about melodrama! One night you drag a fellow off to a naughty place in St. John's Wood to bear witness to the heroic way in which you rescue mysterious veiled ladies on the brink of ruin; and now you command me to meet you at the club at midnight to discuss something of vital importance! I say, you know, once in a way I don't mind seeing you through one of these giddy little escapades; but, really, old chap, if you want a perpetual witness, do find some fellow with stronger nerves than mine. Come now, it's late. Is it another maiden in distress this time?"

"Not a bit of it!" I answered with a laugh. "It's I who am in no end of a fix. I was afraid all the time,

that I had not seen the end of that ridiculous scene at the *Cercle Potocka*—and I hadn't! In fact, it looks now as though I were only beginning to see the beginning of the beastly business—oh, you needn't laugh, either!"

But Tredwell did laugh long and loud, and I was glad of it—it dispelled the last shadow of a doubt as to his absolute loyalty to me. It was not he who had done me the despicable turn of mentioning the fact that I had been seen near the unsavory place. But who, then, was it?

"This is delicious! Out with it, you old Lothario! Somebody been peaching?" said Tredwell lying back in his chair and looking with immense joy at my anxious face.

"Oh, I say, things are really too deucedly ugly for us to laugh at them," I protested. "The other night you refused to tell me who the man was who passed into the *Potocka* place while the lady and I were waiting for the cab. You were, of course, right in doing so; but to-night, old chap, things have reached a point where it is necessary that I should know who he was. I give you my word that I shall not make any improper use of the man's name; but I do most earnestly beg you to tell it me."

"P-h-e-w!" whistled the painter sitting up and beginning to look serious. "What's the game? You know, Croft, that I'll die in the last trench if necessary, seeing you through this matter; but don't you think I'm entitled to know just what game we are playing? Great

lord, man, if you are in a mix-up with this or any other woman, don't fancy for a moment that you will scandalise me by telling me the whole story. I studied in gay Paree, you know, and have cut my wisdom teeth. *Ergo*, out with it!"

"I knew you would immediately suspect a woman in the case," I said smiling; "but there is none—that is, not yet, you know. One is threatened—that's what we must prevent. Here's the whole situation. A certain fashionable woman told me only to-day that Miss Errington went to the damned nuisance of a club with a man. The man—that is I—was recognised, my friend told me, by some one; and I now leave it to you to say whether or not you think it was the man whom you saw go into the lobby of the club while I stood across the courtyard. If you think that it was he, surely you must also think that I have the right to know who he was—in order to cram the lies he is telling about me down his throat. Come now, what say you?"

The effect of my words was striking. Tredwell rose and stood looking down at me with a queer expression of doubt and sorrow on his usually perfectly non-committal face.

"Good God, Croft!" he cried presently in a low, groping sort of voice; "you did not for one instant do me the wrong of imagining that I could have done this thing, did you? I do occasionally dine too well and may in consequence, talk foolishly some times, but by my honour, I never could reach a state of madness or

imbecility in which I could forget what I owe the other fellow in the way of loyalty! It's not in me to fail in any such way as that, pray believe me."

"Of course not," I exclaimed with the sincerest eagerness; "but who was the man who saw me? It must have been he who spoke of me being there."

"Are you sure of that? Perhaps someone else may have caught a glimpse of you in the cab as it turned out of the court into the highroad. Unless it becomes absolutely necessary I really must beg you not to demand that man's name. Take my assurance, dear fellow, that he is a gentleman, and that if he did mention having seen you—which I very seriously question—he did so for what he considered good reasons, and you will find him more than ready to give you entire satisfaction for any wrong that you may think he has done you."

"He will have to give it, by gad! Who is he—that is, do I know him?" I went on piqued by Tredwell's attitude but obliged to admit its propriety and sanity.

"You do know him, and, what's more, you have told me that you like him. So, do be calm about this unfortunate affair, and let things stand to cool for a while. I pledge my honour on the gentleman's making no further use of your name. With your permission, I will see him, and indirectly draw him out on the subject. It will be perfectly proper and natural for me to say that I was at the *Cercle* when he stopped for a moment at the door, and then I can casually mention that you were with me. If the lady comes up at all, I

can truthfully say that she met us at the door and that you refused to enter, and sent her away, not knowing who she was. That will cover the whole situation, and I know the man so thoroughly that I am positive that he will tell me all that he knows of the matter."

This seemed to be so feasible a solution of the matter that I accepted Tredwell's suggestion, and we parted with the understanding that I was to do nothing in the premises without first consulting him. I was worn out nervously when at last I reached home at two o'clock in the morning; but the sleep for which I longed was not to be enjoyed until dawn. On entering my own room I found a note dangling from the chandelier. It was from my aunt, and ran: "Dear Ethelbert: That Mrs. Deniston has been telephoning ever since dinner time. She wishes you to come to her house as soon as you can, and at no matter what hour of the night. If it's Miss E—— who is ill, do be careful, won't you? I don't quite like some things, you know. Good-night, dear boy. Your foolish old aunt Eunice."

Thoroughly stirred up and anxious, I hurried out into the cool night air again, and was soon skimming along the deserted streets in a cab. The great house in Park Lane was dark when I stopped before it, but somebody was evidently on the lookout for me, because a light appeared at a small window at the side of the main entrance before I had even alighted from the cab. The great door was opened before I had occasion to ring, and I stepped into the passage which was in total

darkness. I was about to turn and ask the unseen servant kindly to make a light, when I suddenly felt a hand grasping my arm, and the next moment Miss Errington was whispering close to my ear. Even in the shock of my natural surprise I felt the subtle fascination of her wonderful voice, and seemed to know that those great, sad, hungry eyes of hers were pleading with me as never before. In an instant more, however, I realised that a terrible duty lay before me, a duty calling for every ounce of my prudence and firmness and tact. There could be only one explanation of this last turn in the already sufficiently ugly business. The poor woman had trapped me into the desperate step of coming to her at such an hour! She had evidently made use of the telephone in order to cover her identity, and to ensure the delivery of her message to me by my aunt. Deep and nameless as my disgust and horror were, nevertheless this woman even at that horrid moment seemed to be more than all the world to me. I felt a wild desire to save her from the catastrophe toward which her madness was dragging her—in order that I might restore her to her own glorious self, that I might some day deserve her love, that I might possess her for ever!

“Sh-h!” she whispered. “You are late. Everybody is asleep. Come—this way.”

With repugnance and pity and consternation struggling within me, I followed whither the hand drew me through the darkness, and presently Miss Errington

stopped and before I could prevent it I felt her bare arms about my neck and her quick, hot breath on my face. My position was terrible. That I must snatch the wretched woman away from her unspeakably revolting situation was, of course, my only thought, but how to do so was the question. Any outcry must certainly alarm the household, with who could foresee what results? In fact, quiet as I tried to keep the unfortunate woman, I was in momentary dread lest our footsteps on the marble passage would wake the butler or footman who might sleep below. I suddenly recalled the fact that on the previous occasion my very first word had restored the hysterical maniac to her right mind, with a consequent outbreak of tears and exclamations. It would, therefore, not be wise to attempt to reason with her now, since my pleading might result in her suddenly waking to the true character of her impossible position.

Tortured by conflicting impulses to do a number of equally perilous things to end the horrid scene, I was just about to risk everything by making a determined effort to persuade Miss Errington to return to her own room at once, when she opened a door close to which I now discovered that we had been standing, and by the light of a solitary candle I saw that it was a small ante-room into which she led me. I looked at her. She wore the same gown as on that night at the theatre, and about her arm was the curious band of gold set with emeralds. She noticed that I recognised her dress,

and this seemed to delight her. But it was her face that had changed. Never in all my experience among the insane and the victims of perverted instincts and debauched minds had I seen quite the look of voluptuous craving that now desecrated the superb features of the woman who stood holding her arms out to me. She might well have been Desire incarnate. It was frightful, more than I could bear.

"Love me!" she moaned when she saw that I repulsed her caresses.

"I do," I replied quickly in a suddenly developed plan of escape; "but surely you must know, darling, that Mrs. Deniston and everybody here is opposed to our love. Will you not, then, come with me—at once—so that we may be free?"

"Yes! Yes! My king! Take me, take me—anywhere to be with you," she cried fairly breaking my heart with pity.

"Then let us lose no time. Quick, dearest, run up to your room and change your gown so that we may leave this house at once. And remember, you must make no noise going up stairs. Be quick! Be quick!"

She threw her eager arms about me once more, and then glided out into the passage. Waiting only until I heard her ascend the stairs, I took the candle out into the great vestibule and was overjoyed to find that I had no difficulty in opening the outer doors. I blew out the candle, closed the door quietly behind me, and fled down the steps and along the echoing street guiltily

hoping that the policeman at the corner would not stop me and demand an explanation of my flight. I walked home. I needed the night and the air and the effort in order to pull myself together. It was turning grey in the east when I let myself into my house, and past ten o'clock when my man came up and told me that Mrs. Deniston was below, determined to see me if she had to wait all day.

"Oh, my dear friend," gasped Mrs. Deniston when, in an incredibly short time, I went down into my office to see her, "such a fright as I have had! It must end—or it will finish me; so do be good and take this terrible responsibility off my shoulders—Miss Errington, you know—worse than ever—fatal!"

"Dear me!" I managed to say with decent prevarication.

"Yes, my dear Croft, it's terrible, and I've got to act, and you must advise me. Well, then, you saw how perfectly rational and natural the poor girl was when she and I were here yesterday afternoon? Well, she continued so all the evening, and I never heard her sing so sweetly nor seem so perfectly her own lovely self before. She retired about eleven o'clock, and I of course thought no more of her until I thought I heard a noise at about two o'clock this morning. I sat up and listened, but heard nothing more, and as three of my men sleep in the basement I gave myself no further concern about any possible burglars. I dozed off again, but soon I was sure that I heard foot-

steps on the marble stairs. I rose from my bed and stole softly to my door. Yes! there was certainly someone coming down from the upper story, and instinctively I felt that it must be poor Muriel. So I threw open my door, and there she was! She was dressed fully for the street—more, she was evidently starting on a journey, for she wore a travelling gown and carried a couple of hand-bags. When she saw me she began to berate me for trying to frustrate her meeting with her lover who, she declared, was waiting for her downstairs. I grasped her arm and dragged her into my room just in time to avoid her being seen by the maid who had heard the talking and had come running in great alarm to see what the matter was. Through the closed door I told her that it was nothing, that Miss Errington had had a bad turn, and for her to go back to bed. When I turned to speak to Muriel she was fast asleep, and when she woke two hours later she had forgotten all about the horrible affair. This morning she is as calm and rational as possible. Now, Doctor, what on earth am I to do?"

"There is only one proper thing that you can do," I replied. "You must immediately advise her people of her true condition, if they do not already know what it is; and then, my dear Mrs. Deniston, you must do everything in your power to persuade Miss Errington to place herself under the care of Doctor Yznaga of whom I told you so much. Will you do this? I of course can not appear in the case in any way whatsoever.

I must never see Miss Errington again—until Yznaga shall have triumphed over the pretenders to her brain.”

“You can not act? You must not see her again? Why, what ever can you mean? The dear girl thought you so nice yesterday afternoon, and she has heard so much in praise of your skill that she will insist on you being her medical adviser,” argued Mrs. Deniston with elevated eyebrows.

“I might as well tell you the facts, Mrs. Deniston, as to have you get a false version of them later on. Anyhow, I shall probably need your friendship before we see the end of this miserable matter. It was I whom Miss Errington saw at the theatre; it was I who met her at the door of that disreputable club and turned her back; and it was I who was down in the ante-room in your house this morning at two o’clock. Wait! Wait! I wish Aunt Eunice to tell you something before you say one word.”

I stepped into the passage and called my aunt who came running down with cheery curiosity to see what I wanted. She was surprised to see my visitor, but her manners failed not. After a few words of greeting had been exchanged I called my witness.

“By the bye, aunt, just what was the telephone message you received last night from Park Lane?”

“Message?” exclaimed Aunt Eunice; “why, bless me, it was a series of messages, the last one coming at about one o’clock this morning. They were all the same, and as nearly as I can now recall them, their pur-

port was that you were to come at once to Park Lane, at no matter what hour you returned home. But, Ethelbert my dear, surely this is no news to Mrs. Deniston, since it was she who telephoned, was it not, Mrs. Deniston?"

"No," I hastened to say before Mrs. Deniston could speak, "and that's just what is puzzling us now. Mrs. Deniston did not telephone to this house at all. Some practical joker, I suppose. Thanks, aunt; that was all that I wanted to be sure about."

Aunt Eunice took the hint and her departure.

"There, my dear Mrs. Deniston," I said as soon as the door was shut, "you see that my presence in your house this morning was natural enough. I managed to escape by telling the poor woman to go up and dress for the street—she wished to elope with me, you know. As for the escapade at the club, Mr. Tredwell the painter, you know, went with me for the very purpose of affording me the support of a witness in the event of my conduct being called into question. Do you wish to ask him about the wretched incident?"

"You know that I do not," answered Mrs. Deniston reproachfully; "but I do want you to prepare yourself to be as magnanimous with me when you discover something which I have kept from you—solely to befriend poor Muriel, you know. No, don't ask me now. All that I can think of to-day is, how to get Muriel under your old friend Yznaga's care at once. What is his address? That's it, write it down for me, for my poor

brains are going around in a whirl. And I shall take the bull by the horns and do what I can to get Muriel's people to understand her at last. Of course you are right: she must never see you again. God bless you, dear fellow! This world is not quite lost, is it?"

I bowed her out in silence, neither of us being just at the moment able to think of anything not utterly fatuous to say. From her brougham window Mrs. Deniston waved me a weepy little goodbye, and I felt as I shut my door that I had finally shut out from my life the woman who had touched a deeper something within me than woman had ever done—and in the end had become the very embodiment of the nameless and deadly thing! Wondering much as to who her people might be, and rejoicing over the thought that Miss Errington was in a fair way to get the help of the one man on earth who could render help effectually, I erased her from the tablet of my thinking, and plunged into my work of preparation for the part I was to play in the supreme effort to be made on behalf of Lady Torbeth.

CHAPTER XIV

WITH the decidedly embarrassing matter of Muriel Errington now happily disposed of, I threw myself with real delight into the work of perfecting my plans under Yznaga's directions, for making the now famous experiments looking to the relief of Lady Torbeth. I spent the day at Maidenhead, and was amazed at the amount of work which the great thinker had already done on the case. He had made an exhaustive examination of Lady Torbeth, subjecting her to hypnotic control in order to explore the inmost recesses and windings of her mind both in its normal and abnormal states. The result, it seems, was startling even to him experienced as he was. And what he then told me was necessary for me to do was certainly startling to me. This is not the place for me to state just what this was that I was to do; but I may say that Yznaga's intended line of treatment of Lady Torbeth, quite ignoring what it involved on my part, placed me in a most uncomfortable attitude toward Lord Torbeth, because I felt that a course so drastic, so unspeakably daring and at the same time so absolutely a new departure in medical practice could not decently be entered upon without the husband's consent obtained

after he had been made fully aware of exactly what it was proposed to do.

Before leaving Yznaga I outlined to him the case of Miss Errington, and asked him to receive her and Mrs. Deniston with special interest for my sake. This he agreed to do, although I could see that he looked upon as an impertinence the attempt to force upon his attention, absorbed by a problem of infinite significance, a simple case of hysteria. Then I hurried back to town and arranged with Burton to take over my patients during my absence, and with my banker to provide my aunt with funds.

I was trying to decide what it was proper for me to do with respect to Lord Torbeth, when an unexpected development immensely increased my conviction that I should take him into my confidence completely—and the difficulty of doing so! My relations with the viscount, you see, were not alone those of a medical man and his patient, but also those of one gentleman toward another between whom confidences of the most intimate and delicate nature have been exchanged. Yet I could hardly reveal to the husband all that I had learned respecting his wife, from the Duke of Ackerby, himself another and sorely tried patient. But, on the other hand, it was in view of just what had transpired through the duke that I based my hope that the viscount would see the absolute necessity to allow the proposed experiments to be made. From Yznaga, moreover I, had got facts concerning Lady Torbeth which must certainly

prove irresistible arguments for the treatment he intended to give her, but it was not clear that I had the right—shall I add the courage?—to mention these to a man of such exquisitely nice feeling as the viscount. Altogether, then, my position was awkward enough without what now developed in an interview with the duke: after that talk my fix appeared to be hopeless. It was as though all parties to a delicate and vital legal issue had inadvertently consulted the same solicitor, in a way, too, that made it impossible for him to head off their confidences or to decline their clientage!

Lord Ackerby sent for me late that evening, and I found him in a state of pitiable remorse and dangerous excitement. I forced him to take a powerful opiate, and when he was refreshed by a few hours' sleep I returned to his rooms and heard what he felt that he must tell me. I was unspeakably shocked by the revelation; what, I asked myself, must be its effect upon the woman's husband were he to be told?

After two more days of anxious thought I reached the conclusion that it would be best that I at least see Lord Torbeth. The extent of my confession to him might be determined by the way in which he received me, and by the effect upon him of what I would first say. I knew him to be a magnanimous and patient man of unusual balance and sanity, as well as a husband whose sole object in life was the good and happiness of his most interesting and unfortunate wife. He would not, I assured myself, see more in my words than really

lay back of them, nor allow any feeling of suspicion or jealousy to interfere with my honest effort to help him.

Accordingly, on the third day after the dean and I had had our memorable interview with Yznaga I wrote the viscount and begged an opportunity to see him before my departure presently for Paris. He fortunately was in town, and sent me a cordial invitation to dine with him at his house in Queen's Gate on that very evening.

"Fire away," he said when dinner was over and he had dismissed the servants, and we were left alone over our cigars and cognac.

"As I intimated in my note," I began, "I have sought you, my lord, in order to beg you to help me out of an embarrassing situation into which I have been drawn. I telegraphed your lordship day before yesterday, that I had the most positive grounds for believing that Lady Torbeth had gone to Paris. You will, I trust pardon my assumption that you were not aware of her ladyship's movements at the present—you hinted, you may recollect, that her departure from Ackerby Castle had come as a surprise to you, and that Lady Torbeth's peculiar nervous condition sometimes leads her to make these sudden changes of plan without first advising you."

"Certainly," replied the viscount calmly, "but now, for heaven's sake, don't treat me as though I were a sentimental old maid. I hate mystery. Drop it,

please. I noticed all during dinner that you have something beastly uncomfortable on your mind. After what I told you the other night, I do think you should realise that I have had more than one bad quarter of an hour—so blaze away!”

“It is downright fine of you to take things as you do, and I especially appreciate your pluck at the present moment,” I exclaimed warmly, “for I have, as you surmised, something beastly uncomfortable on my mind.”

“Before you begin,” the viscount interrupted “would you mind telling me how you happened to run across the viscountess? She left the castle without saying a word to me about where or why she was going. You will find, Croft, that the truth and I get on fairly well together, no matter what it may be. You would best be honest with me, and absolutely frank. Go on!”

There was no mistaking his superb manliness, nor doubting this strong man’s grit; so I banished whatever remained of dread lest plain speaking might hurt his pride. It might pain him; but I was talking to a man ready and able to suffer without flinching.

“Frankly, then, my lord,” I replied trying to be as calm as he was, “I heard of her ladyship’s movements after she had left the castle, from Lord Ackerby. He is a patient of mine, and when he sent for me last Monday morning he happened to mention that he had come up to town in response to a telegram from Lady Torbeth.”

I watched the viscount’s face closely as I spoke, but

there was no evidence that he regarded the conduct of his wife as challenging his suspicions or disapproval in any way. In fact, his expression did not alter in the least. His was a great power of self mastery.

"It appears," I went on when the viscount made no comment, "that Lady Torbeth's nervous trouble returned suddenly, and as she naturally desired to place herself without delay under Doctor Yznaga's care she had recourse to the duke's assistance, thereby avoiding alarming you unnecessarily. She had learned of Yznaga from Lord Ackerby, you know. I saw Yznaga yesterday, and he told me that he had made a thorough examination of the viscountess, and he feels confident of effecting her entire mental and spiritual restoration—provided you are willing to let him try. I came here especially to talk this over."

Lord Torbeth sat silently smoking and looking at me for some moments. I felt overjoyed on finding that my revelations had not resulted in a storm of jealousy. He seemed utterly to ignore my reference to the duke; he thought only of his wife's future.

"Well, go on. I knew all this before—except what you tell me about Lord Ackerby coming to town to help the viscountess to find your uncanny old Spanish magician. Awfully decent, that, of Ackerby to help me out! Poor old chap, if he'd let B. and S. alone, he wouldn't be a half bad sort. Well now, Croft, do get on. What's the all of it, the worst of it, that was spoiling your dinner, you know?"

"Really, my lord," I hastened to say with rising cheerfulness, "these were all the facts. What troubled me was, to decide what it was proper that I should do under all the circumstances."

"I fear I don't take your point," said the viscount looking at me queerly.

"Why, you know, it's Yznaga's desire that I take part—a vitally important part—in the matter of treating the viscountess. When you know what precisely it is that he proposes to do, perhaps you may not see your way to permitting so audacious an experiment to be tried with your wife as the subject. Now that you are aware that her ladyship has consulted Yznaga, and that she has gone to Paris at his suggestion, you may feel that you ought to meet him and get from himself the exact statement of what is proposed. In every way, my lord, Doctor Yznaga is a man well worth meeting. Will you meet him, and if so, when?"

"I have already had that honour," answered the viscount leaning back in his chair and laughing at my little start of surprise.

"Yes," he went on, "the viscountess returned home yesterday—not from Paris, but from a friend's house here in town—returned, I say, in quite the most hopeful frame of mind that she has enjoyed for months. She asked me to accompany her to Maidenhead, and I of course did so gladly and was present when Yznaga examined her. I saw him again last night privately. If he is not mad, then all the rest of us are. But I

confess, the old beggar personally is a joy—nothing equal to his chivalrous self since Don Quixote, by Jove—quite as innocent of worldly wisdom, too, as the knight of La Mancha, for when I offered him a hundred pounds and told him that I would settle a suitable annuity on him if he succeeds in setting the viscountess up, the fine old dreamer begged me not to insult him! How's that, now? Sir Porter Hope never fails to send me his little reminders, I can tell you—cure or no cure! However, I stumbled upon an old lady—looked like the mummy of Pharaoh's wife—in the passage at Yznaga's cottage, and, while she also balked at the hundred pound note, she rose beautifully to the handful of sovereigns which I slipped into her wrinkled talon of a hand."

While he was speaking I was trying to think out a number of things. Of course, all of my fears had proved to be groundless, for everything had already advanced along the very line to which I had scarcely dared to hope that I could bring them; but there still remained the very grave probability that this calm reserved Englishman, accustomed to look at everything through the eye of a conservative and insular philosophy would reject as utter madness and a blasphemous, repudiation of Christian truth the theory of human life upon which Yznaga's treatment must be based. I laughed heartily at the viscount's humour, however, and thanked the gods for the unexpected turn that things had taken; but his lordship's next words had the effect

of throwing me back into the state of uneasiness from which I had temporarily been lifted.

"Of course, Croft," he said speaking very seriously again, "the viscountess is now your patient, though you have not yet met her. You have chosen to consult this foreign gentleman. Frankly, I don't quite like him. But as I am totally ignorant of these matters, repose absolute confidence in yourself and have reached a point of final despair respecting my unhappy wife's ultimate cure, I shall do nothing whatever to embarrass your movements in treating her. I do think, though, that it is only fair and fitting that you tell me plainly and without mystifying technicalities just exactly what you intend to do."

"I was hoping that Yznaga himself had told you, my lord," I replied, not quite truthfully, for I well knew the old man's insurmountable dislike of anything like boasting of his ability, and the extreme difficulty he must meet with in attempting to explain in English and to a lay mind the profound and involved speculations and hypotheses of which he was the modest author.

"Oh, he did tell me a lot of things, you know," replied Lord Torbeth, "but it was all Greek to me. Surely you can give a man of ordinary intelligence and fair education some idea of this theory of yours, can't you?"

"I can scarcely hope to tell you in one evening what it has taken the master minds of Europe years of arduous research and experiment to formulate," I answered, "but I came here to try to give you as clear an idea as

possible, because your wife is now my patient, as you say, and I would not feel justified in going ahead without first consulting you. I promise you a surprise—possibly a shock. The dean had a long interview with Yznaga, and I think it proper to tell you that the good man at once consigned both Yznaga and me to perdition.”

“That rather encourages me,” replied the viscount smiling, “for I have generally found the facts to be exactly contrary to what my very reverend father-in-law blissfully believes them to be. Go on, go on—this last point is most cheering! And by the bye, Croft, I may just say here, that the dean will in no way be allowed to interfere with whatever you propose doing. I am through with that sort of thing. If he had kept his meddlesome fingers out of the matter, I might long ago have got the poor viscountess in a way to be fit again; but her fatuous father invariably attacks her on moral grounds, and after one of his maudlin appeals to her altogether too morbid religious temperament she collapses into one of those spells of melancholy and unrest of which I have told you. And the reaction to the animal condition when it comes, as it always does, is horrible, unspeakable.”

“What you now tell me,” I replied eagerly, “gives me in my turn great hope of getting you to understand our position. If you will kindly push over the brandy and allow me to light a fresh cigar, I will do what I can to make that position clear.”

I then proceeded to review the advance made by science during the past twenty of thirty years, dwelling at considerable length upon biology and metaphysics, with particular reference to the new science of physico-psychology. Then I came to the question of the revolutionising discoveries in the field of the radio-active substances, with the consequent radical reconstruction of the whole theory respecting the structure, functions, and nature of matter, and the new aspects of cerebral and nervous force resulting therefrom.

"But I bore you, my lord," I said apologetically when I came to the end of a long discussion of ether and electricity as now viewed by science.

"Well, really, you know, since you mention it—you do rather," drawled Lord Torbeth, and we both laughed "I feel as though I were the chairman of one of those beastly scientific society meetings down at Dunchester—chairman can't cut, you know, when the local bore reads his paper! Good lord, Croft, I occasionally glance at the magazines and reviews, don't you know, and consequently have heard all this learned business before. But what in the name of bedlam, has all this to do with Lady Torbeth, or with your charming old pantaloons at Maidenhead?"

"Presently, presently, my lord," I replied not at all abashed, for I knew with what real interest and close attention he had followed every word that I had spoken.

"Where was I? Oh, yes—the electron being the——"

"Never mind where you were, you know! Begin

somewhere else—nearer the point, if you don't mind," broke in the viscount.

"Oh, you'll find that there is more in all this than you are perhaps willing to admit," I laughed, and then went on seriously. "Little by little, then, the less notorious but infinitely greater thinkers and investigators have laid siege to the citadel of man's brain, and the result is, that—with the possible exception of some sort of hypothetical 'consciousness' found necessary as a temporary scaffolding upon which to stand—all of man's mental attributes can be shown to be nothing but states or modes or functions as the case may be, of purely physical substances acted upon by ether waves or other forms of that universal series of vibrations which we call life. I see that you now begin to perceive the connection with Lady Torbeth's case."

He nodded quietly, almost sadly, and I went on.—
"Yes, your lordship, memory, will, emotion, passion, thought—all are now known to be, not spiritual acts of a lordly autocratic Ego, but the secretions and other resultants of functional activity in the cells and centres of the brain and nervous system. It may be possible to conceive of a 'personality' back of all these functions, but if there be any such 'individual,' it is a helpless and voiceless and nameless phantom, and not the true master of the house of the brain on which, as Yznaga so tellingly puts it, the old fraudulent Ego is thought to have a mortgage—a mortgage, my lord, at a ruinous rate of interest, but now forever to be cancelled by being

proved a diabolical forgery! Why, my dear Lord Torbeth," I went on, rising and standing over him, "it is perfectly within the power of science to treat the brain centres in such a way as practically to create another character in a man. What, after all, is 'character' but the sum of one's hereditary and environmental impressions? Very well, then, as all of these impressions are demonstrably subject to alteration, to development, to extinguishment, or to depression or suspension, as may be desired, does it not follow, I ask, that 'character,' which is but the sum of them, must also be subject to alteration at will? You now doubtless catch the drift of my long harangue, do you not?"

"I do," he replied with a tone of awe, "but, my God, man, what does it all mean, you know?"

"I appreciate your feeling," I said, "and confess that even after working at the side of Steinmetz, the foremost experimentalist along this line, for years I cannot quite free myself at times from the old superstition, that 'I' am a something beyond the reach of the scalpel or the subtlest etheric vibration. But, my lord, as man to man, as one English gentleman to another, as a friend who has come to feel the profoundest sympathy for you and admiration of your heroic suffering, I tell you, that it is possible for me with the assistance of my great teachers to expel for ever the sensual, morbid, emotional and other degenerate claimants to your wife's mind, and to secure to you the calm, strong, intellectual and sympathetic woman whom you married and who still

strives bravely, if not very successfully, to prevent the foreclosure of the damnable mortgage which her teachers have told her is held by the non-existent ghost who haunts the corridors of this poor human mind of ours. Will you allow me to prove that this can be done? Or will you, like the dean her father, sacrifice this wonderful woman—destined by her peculiar nature to lead mankind to salvation from the tyrant ‘I’—and continue to worship as a spiritual sovereign an Ego which is nothing but a bundle of chemicals arranged by nature to perform certain ineffably glorious works—but chemicals none the less?”

Viscount Torbeth merely grasped my hand, but we understood each other.

CHAPTER XV

JUST here I cannot resist the inclination to share with my more imaginative and gifted readers (gifted, that is, with a sense of humour), the joy which was mine by reason of certain eruptions of deliciously funny British insularity and bumptiousness during the fortnight following my interview with Lord Torbeth. Those readers who, possessing no funny bone, feel only curiosity to know what "they did next" are hereby warned that they would better skip this short chapter.

Of the thrilling part which I was to play in the salvation of Lady Torbeth's brain it will be necessary that I speak at great length presently, but I really must tell such as may care to hear, about some quite unlooked-for incidents which for a time served to entertain the public, divert me, and plunge poor Aunt Eunice into a sea of uneasiness.

It appears that when Dean Chelmsford realised that the viscount was not going to permit him to interfere in any way with Lady Torbeth's treatment, the very reverend gentleman had recourse to every Britisher's method of ventilating his grievance—he wrote to the newspapers. My attention was called to one, then to two more remarkable communications signed "Anglicanus," in which the writer darkly hinted that "not in atheistic

and frivolous France, but right here in sober, solid, Protestant England, there is no longer room for doubt that certain medical charlatans and pseudo-scientists are about to play upon the credulity of weak-minded persons, and to exploit certain questionable methods of hypnotic and other highly immoral forms of medical (?) practice which, if suffered to be used at will by these atheistical quacks, must result in the serious moral and physical hurt of their misguided victims!"

This was enough. Within forty-eight hours every edition of every London paper contained letters from all sorts and conditions of men, betraying every degree of ignorance and wrong-headedness. The constant note running through all of these epistles was, that what might be good enough for the degenerate Latin peoples or other papistical or undesirable foreigners, was not to be tolerated among Protestant Anglo-Saxons! It was good to hear the comments made by my old Spanish philosopher when I entertained him each evening by reading aloud to him the day's crop of asininity; good also to observe the stiffening effect of this fatuous criticism upon Lord Torbeth's mind.

On the fifth day of the merry war, however, one Godfrey Bompus, M. D., ventured where angels would have hesitated, and launched out into a general *exposé* of what he styled "recent Continental quackery." We afterwards learned that this eminent man of science resided in Dunchester where, no doubt, he was physician in ordinary to the dean and chapter. Now

there were evidences in the Bompus fulmination that the learned man had got his highly impressionist knowledge of the advanced theories of the great experimentalists of Europe, not at first hand in their laboratories, but from so much as he could remember of what the dean could remember of what Yznaga had told him: So, we thanked the gods for the joy of Bompus, and looked upon his letter to the *Times* newspaper as a contribution to the gaiety of nations. But it contained one ugly feature. Whereas Dean Balaam had discreetly forborne mentioning any names, his ass found it impossible to restrain himself, and brayed forth the name of Yznaga. Bompus wrote, that "after being ignominiously expelled from the University of Salamanca on account of his preposterous speculations—at once inimical to Christian morality and contrary to the scientific teaching of the really great minds of to-day—this Yznaga has come to England, and from an unpretentious cottage at Maidenhead he peers malignly forth like a noxious spider for the victims whom the more rigorous laws of Spain prevented him snaring there."

"By Jove, Doctor Yznaga," exclaimed Lord Torbeth when I read this letter aloud as we three sat by the river that night, "if ever words were actionable, those are! Sue the cad for fifty thousand pounds! If you will permit me, I will instruct my solicitor to proceed, gladly bearing all the costs myself, and we will teach this fellow something—an unmitigated ass whom I once

had the pleasure of putting out of the deanery when he insisted upon treating the viscountess."

"No—thank your lordship," replied the old man chuckling silently; "but I really would like to live long enough to perform the autopsy on this extraordinary creature's brain! Is it thinkable that your English medical colleges confer degrees upon the genus Bompus?"

At my entreaty the shrinking old genius allowed Lord Torbeth to undertake the immediate and total suppression of the only Bompus. That worthy end was attained with neatness and despatch. The viscount sent the following telegram to the head of five or six medical schools of the highest authority on the Continent: "What standing has Doctor Yznaga late of Salamanca, as a scientist and physicist? Doctor Bompus of Dunchester states in London *Times* that Yznaga is discredited."

The replies were prompt—and Bompus perished. While the wording of the several answers differed, their purport was in each instance the same. Heidelberg replied: "Yznaga is the foremost living authority in the whole field of cerebral pathology; but who is Bompus?" Steinmetz, speaking for the Faculty of Vienna, said: "Yznaga, the greatest name in psychophysiology, was retired from his chair at Salamanca, to the eternal disgrace of that ancient seat of learning, because he would not submit to clerical interference, nor sacrifice scientific truth to placate ignorant and

bigoted ecclesiastics. If England now boasts Yznaga as a resident, she may consider herself fortunate indeed; but who in the name of Dogberry is this Bompus?"

Lord Torbeth sent the answers to his telegram to the *Times*, without comment—and the floodgates were opened! Eminent surgeons from many parts of England hastened to Maidenhead, while others lost no time in writing fulsome letters to the newspapers, lest it be thought that they were even as this Bompus, deceased. Pepita saw in the unwonted number of pilgrims suddenly arriving at Maidenhead a new order of creation and a perennially filled larder; but the poor philosopher himself was so upset by the invasion that he slipped quietly away to an even more obscure cottage out St. Albans way, whence in turn he fled to Belgium and oblivion.

My turn was coming. The thunders of correspondence had almost died away, when one morning there appeared in one of the London journals a thoughtful and dignified article by no less an authority than the weighty publicist and economist, Mark Fairweather of Oxford, who had done me the honour to seek me out at my own house, to discuss the question. He now did me the far greater honour of publicly accepting me as a foeman worthy of his ponderous and keen-edged steel, by actually making me the object of an eight-column attack!

Aunt Eunice now saw visions also of a new order of creation, but in her vision there was a woeful probability

of empty larders—why *couldn't* I have kept out of the unpopular row anyhow? Just when I was beginning to make such desirable connections, too!

A day or two afterward the *Times* oracularly declared in a leader, that Mark Fairweather had finally disposed of me; I had been routed, horse, foot, and dragoons; my critic's arguments were unanswerable, etc., etc. Accordingly, I at once set to work to answer the unanswerable. There is no reason for boring the reader of this simple story with an account of my controversy with Fairweather, and I allude to it only to show how wedded even the cultured mind may be to those ethical and social prejudices which we have through long ages of their unchallenged existence come to look upon as self-evident truths. The gist of Fairweather's contention and of my rejoinder is contained in the closing paragraphs of my last published article in the review. I quote a few sentences from it, and then will press on to narrate the tragic events which lay concealed in the days just ahead of me at the time. Again I say to my less intelligent reader—skip!

I wrote: "The learned gentleman sums up by asking, Are we, then, to look forward to a time in the near future when government, having become 'paternal' in a decidedly literal sense, shall include a minister or commissioner whose godlike duty it shall be to regulate the number, quality, and conditions of births; and under the supervision of the local boards undertake

the manufacture of human character on lines laid down by act of parliament?

"To this question, which I presume most Englishmen will consider excruciatingly funny, I reply, Why not? Why not indeed—always assuming that such a minister or commission could really accomplish so altogether desirable and sacred a work for the good of society? Why not? Government has already immensely extended its paternal functions in ways not dreamed of by our immediate forerunners. Government to-day in an ever-increasing variety of ways stands in *loco parentis*, and does undertake the 'manufacture' of human character.

"Government, for example, no longer permits one to be as dirty as one wishes, nor to live as one pleases, nor to allow his offspring to remain in ignorance. It punishes by fine a parent who wilfully neglects to educate his child; it prohibits the sale of alcohol to certain persons, and enacts laws regulating the sale of food; it provides schools, gymnasiums, churches, reformatories, public baths, libraries, police, all of these and many more institutions being intended precisely for the 'manufacture' of more desirable human character. More, government now strives to stand in *loco parentis* in just the way at which my learned friend sneers, by doing what it may to regulate marriage and so to prevent the generation of physically or morally unfit offspring, and to encourage and stimulate the generation of the fit. Again, government exercises a

censorship over the press and the drama with a view to 'manufacturing' (through the imagination) only a worthy type of human character. By all these precautions government manifestly indicates its belief in the possibility of improving humanity through governmental interference.

"It will be seen, therefore, that Professor Fairweather and I differ not so much, if at all, in our views as to the right of society to exercise any control over the forces which shape the individual character of man—nobody but a savage or an anarchist holds any such view as that society has not this right; but merely as to the extent of this right, and as to the limits set to its exercise either by the spiritual or the physical constitution of man's nature. I maintain that if there were no limits—set either by nature or by law—it would be a consummation devoutly to be wished; and it is my glorious belief that the limits formerly set by law are fast being enlarged (witness what is stated above as to compulsory education and sanitation), and that those limits commonly thought to be imposed by nature are also rapidly being extended by the splendid labours of such men as Yznaga and others of whom the world is not worthy. If it be admittedly a thing every way desirable to have healthy, sane, virtuous, and intelligent human beings on this earth, I cannot see what limits one would wish to place upon the power of society informed by science to control or neutralise the pernicious influences of heredity; to treat the various brain

cells and other centres of mental and physical energy so that they shall produce only the best possible results; to come to regard man as a complex and delicate machine which will do good work or bad according as its parts are properly constructed and cared for and used; to do, in short, wholly and effectually what the church and the school and the prison and the hospital and the law now do only partially and ineffectually; namely, develop an ideal type of human life, or, to use Professor Fairweather's contemptuous phrase, to manufacture men!

"We send our children to school, our sick to the hospital, our mentally weak to the asylum, and our morally weak to the prison. God speed the day when society shall be able to suppress pernicious tendencies, neutralise evil hereditary impulses, develop right wills, and manufacture ideal human character, under the supervision of a truly 'royal' commission whose corps of skilful surgeons and physicians shall, through the use of electricity, or radio-energy, or surgery, or vibratory control, or chemistry, or however science may determine, control the cerebral functions of man whence flow all that is 'spiritual' in human life! Toward this happy end no man has ever done more than the great genius whom British cocksureness and insular prejudice have placed recently in the stocks of public ridicule—Don Pablo Maria Yznaga y Morales."

CHAPTER XVI

At last Yznaga wrote me to proceed to Paris, everything being in readiness for us to begin the crucial experiments for which I had been impatiently waiting for weeks. I immediately put my affairs in shape—very much as though I expected never to return—and set out for Paris on the morning of July 29th.

"Have you met this Lady Torbeth on whose behalf you propose to submit to this most unprecedented ordeal?" asked de Moulin when we were taking our coffee after dinner, in the upper loggia of his villa in Neuilly.

"No," I replied, "and from all accounts, I have missed an uncommon pleasure."

"You have indeed," he said eagerly, "for she is without exception the most fascinating woman whom I have ever known, especially so since Freycinet has temporarily expelled those two other personalities who so stubbornly dispute the right to her brain. You are particularly unfortunate, Croft, because it will now be quite impossible for you to meet her, as Yznaga has without doubt explained to you. But tell me, dear fellow, are you quite sure that you are prepared to undergo this proposed ordeal? Has Yznaga gone fully into all the aspects of the step which you are about

to take? He is enthusiastic, but he is seventy-five years old, and at seventy-five life does not look quite as it does at thirty-five, you know. Then, too, Yznaga is an idealist, a knight-errant, a martyr by instinct; whereas Ethelbert Croft is a rising young English surgeon whose achievements already warrant the hope of a famous career, a long and useful life amid the choicest surroundings, a probable peerage or knighthood, and an old age of honour and ease in one of those lordly English country seats that make England the paradise of the gentleman of leisure."

"Talk about Lady Torbeth, please," I protested laughing.

De Moulin smiled and shook his head, but presently went on when he saw that I was set against discussing my connection with the case.

"Well, then," he began, "Lady Torbeth came to me at Yznaga's suggestion, and I was not long in discovering that she presents the most perfectly developed instance of complex personality ever brought to the attention of science. I made some preliminary experiments upon her brain, which proved that in her we have an almost ideal opportunity to demonstrate the non-existence of the human Ego or will apart from the material brain organs through which it functions. Here is a being of at least three distinct states of personal existence, subject in turn to three distinct wills or conscious persons. If we can ultimately and permanently expel two of these; if we can in the mean-

time give one after another of them the dominion over her character, enthroning and dethroning each at our own pleasure, and practically destroying temporarily the two not then reigning personalities—why then, it is clear that we shall have conclusively proved that the boasted independent spirit of man is nothing more than the outcome of accidental cerebral conditions, and that the mortgage on man's brain, which Yznaga has devoted his life to dispute, is a base forgery, an utterly spurious claim!"

"Quite so," I answered, "but can we do this? Why has it not been done before? Pray don't misunderstand me. I of course believe absolutely that we shall succeed—only I am not quite clear as to just why this singular English woman presents in so unique a way the first opportunity for proof. Speak freely. Yznaga was too much engrossed in studying the case when I last saw him, for him to discuss it with me in detail; and I have not seen him for almost a month."

"Well, you see," replied de Moulin, "Lady Torbeth's case is unique because she presents such clearly defined antagonistic personalities. We have of course treated other cases, but unfortunately all that we could hope to establish in those instances was, to prove that the human will can be brought into subjection to external material agents at the will of the pathologist. Those persons possessed abnormally developed wills which we were able to reduce to normality by treatment; but—and this is the crux of the matter—in

Lady Torbeth, if we are successful, we shall have extinguished a will, we shall have forced one personality to abdicate forever in favour of quite another. Oh, yes, we have accomplished truly wonderful results, but negatively only. I wonder if you happened to meet a queer old lady who usually lives with Yznaga—Pepita, he calls her?”

“I certainly did,” I replied with a laugh, “and I can recommend her cooking. And such a childlike character I am sure I never met before—a baby, and yet she must be close on ninety or a hundred.”

“She is not yet seventy,” said de Moulin quietly.

“What? That wrinkled parchment not yet seventy?” I exclaimed.

“No,” answered he enjoying my surprise, “and you think her childlike, do you? Let me tell you that a year ago she was as near to being a tigress, a fiend, as I fancy it is possible for a woman to be. Yes! This gentle Pepita is—or rather was a year ago—that Señora Dolores Bueno of whom you may have heard when you were working with Heredia in Pampeluna.”

I jumped. This was incredible. I looked my unbelief, and de Moulin went on—“Let me tell you about her. Her story would not be believed if it appeared in a novel. She was grossly wronged some thirty years ago by a certain grandee who deserted her, and this so preyed upon her sensitive mind that she became practically insane for a time. This period of frantic despair and violence was followed by one of morbid

religious excitement during which she retired to a convent of Carmelites at Saragossa. There she lived for over twenty years and enjoyed the reputation of a saint, saw visions, worked miracles, and all the rest of it. Then suddenly, about five years ago, she began to show signs of a return to her former state of desperate hate for the man who had ruined her early life, and for society at large. She apostatised, left the convent, and began writing those articles for the reviews which spread her fame over Europe—acrid, scathing, frightful denunciations of society, they were, I assure you. Personally she was in a hell of remorse and impotent rage until, on hearing of Yznaga, she sought him. He declared himself able to relieve her—but it must be at the cost of sacrificing her memory and the greater part of her intellectual make-up! She accepted the offer only too gladly, and the result you have yourself seen! She now knows only what she knew when she was a simple, devout little girl at the nuns' school at Pampeluna; she feels no remorse, since she remembers nothing of the tragedy of her life; she cooks, she prays, she putters about—and is happy."

"And just how did you and Yznaga accomplish this?" I asked.

"Easily enough. It was simply a matter of wiping off two score years from the slate of memory—merely curtailing the activity of the centres radiating emotional and reminiscent impulses. But all this, as you will have seen, is a very different task from that which con-

fronts us in the case of Lady Torbeth. In Pepita we merely circumscribed the powers of the personality dwelling in her brain, and we did this by the very simple process of suppressing some of the cerebral faculties. But in Lady Torbeth we have totally to extinguish personality, and naturally we can not do this by suppressing all of her cerebral faculties, for that would mean death or complete mental eclipse. No. We must actually drive out every vestige of two of her personal beings while leaving—this is the exquisitely delicate and immensely difficult part of it all—while leaving, I say, all of the brain centres intact for the normal and regular exercise of the mental functions needed by the incoming tenant! Once we have done that, Yznaga's contention will be for evermore established—and human life shall have achieved the true kingdom of heaven."

"Glorious!" I cried, "but can this indeed be done?"

"It has been partially done already," answered de Moulin looking at me with a strange expression "but before we can say positively that we can do it completely we must subject some brain to an unspeakably awful test. You, as I understand it, have offered your brain for this sublime purpose. There could be no nobler, no more sacred cause for which to give one's life. You will scarcely be called upon to give your life, but, my very dear friend, I told Yznaga that I would not proceed until you had been given an opportunity to look at the matter from every point of view.

Listen now, please, and think as you have never thought before while I speak to you."

I am rather good at deciphering on a face the trend of what is passing in the mind, and at that moment I felt certain that de Moulin was mentally communicating with some one apparently over my shoulder. He continued to look at me, however, and then said—"I tell you frankly, then, that we are going practically to blot out your entire personality. It may be—mark that I say may be, not that it necessarily will be—it may be impossible for us to bring you back after we have once exiled you from your brain. We hope and believe that we can recall as well as banish your personality; but as an honourable man I feel it to be my duty to tell you in all candour that we may not be able to do so. This means that your entire brain may remain a blank for the rest of your life, or perhaps, that some wholly different character may take up its abode in your skull. Are you willing to take this awful risk? Think it over before you answer."

"I have already thought it over—profoundly and without sentiment," I replied, "and my confidence in your own and Yznaga's opinion is so absolute, and my devotion to science is so deep, that I joyfully grasp this unparalleled opportunity to serve the truth. I have arranged my affairs with reference to any possible contingency. I am more than ready. When shall we begin? Soon, I sincerely hope."

De Moulin shook my hand warmly, and once more

I felt sure that he was communicating with somebody behind me.

"Oh, as to beginning," he said smiling; "we have begun already—look!"

I turned and looked as he pointed, and saw two great eyes fixed on me—eyes that fairly penetrated my brain. Freycinet was sitting just within the shadow of the window, and as I looked into his eyes I was conscious of a creeping drowsiness which deepened rapidly. He was placing me in a hypnotic state preparatory to creating by suggestion the idea that I was someone other than Ethelbert Croft. I was soon fast asleep, and when I woke again I believed myself to be one Edward Templeton, a cultured man of leisure about to travel on the Continent. For several weeks I knew no other conscious life than that of this gentleman of refined and rather mystical tastes for whom even yet I cherish a feeling of downright friendliness.

CHAPTER XVII

IN the company of a Mr. and Mrs. Ashburton and their *protégée*, Miss Leighton, I left Paris in a few days, myself being Edward Templeton of course, and we made our way by easy stages through Switzerland and Bavaria finally reaching Dresden where we were to stop for some time. I found Ashburton a delightful travelling companion. He had been everywhere, and he possessed that rarest of charms in a holiday mate—an entire willingness to let the other fellow do as he pleased. While our tastes were pretty much alike, there were many times when I preferred to “do” some part of a town or a gallery or a neighbouring show place at an hour other than that at which he wished to visit it, and he very decently refrained from exercising the autocratic tyranny of the usual head of a tourists’ party. Mrs. Ashburton—a quiet middle-aged French woman of somewhat tepid temperament—was also most considerate and cultivated headaches and other ailments which kept her in her room a great deal of the time, which thoughtfulness, together with her husband’s proper idea of individual rights, resulted in leaving me free to spend most of my time with Miss Leighton.

In the character of Templeton I was not unlike

myself as Croft as far as my previous relations with women were concerned, for Templeton had attained the threshold of middle life practically unscathed. I had met many women, but while some of them had aroused in me a passing emotion or passion, and all of them had interested me—Templeton like Croft was a poet—none of them had achieved the reduction of my inmost citadel. I valued my independence too highly, or I held too lofty notions as to the value of one's self-surrender, or perhaps it was that I had never met the one woman destined to transform the selfishness masquerading as devotion to my career, into the rapturous self-immolation of a life lived for another. Be this as it may, as a matter of fact, until I met Gertrude Leighton I had never found a woman who seemed to understand and echo the nameless things which were for me the hidden meaning of the mystery and joy of life.

The happy accident which had now thrown us daily and hourly together made unnecessary the usual period of formal and gradual development of an acquaintance formed in the ordinary way in society. We were at liberty to take each other's measure at once; we needed not to lie to one another during the preliminaries of our friendship. Each was perfectly free to show the other what must inevitably be revealed sooner or later; and accordingly each was free to take or leave just as each saw fit. In our very first walk it became clear to me that this woman was different from all the women whom I had ever known, and in a number of little ways

which startled me I discovered that she thought and felt and dreamed of many things—the deep and mystical things—precisely as I myself (Templeton) did. So it was with perfectly natural and sincere freedom that Miss Leighton took my hand when we reached the hotel and said to me, “I’m so glad you came. We shall be good friends, shall we not? And thank you, oh, so much, for what you said to me about the symbolists, for I knew so little about them—yet symbolism is the religion of my heart.”

Gertrude Leighton was a woman of perhaps thirty although in the exquisite purity of her mind—purity seemed to envelop her like a luminous mist—she was as a little child. Never before had I known anything at all like the fragrance, the joyousness, the winsomeness of this woman’s nature. She seemed fairly to thrill at the touch of beauty, to enter into the secret of beauty’s self—a secret which haunted and almost terrified me. She was good enough to fancy that she was learning from me, because I talked to her by the hour about music and pictures and books and their history; but in very truth it was I who sat at this woman’s feet to learn what one may not find in books, what only the pure in heart may see.

She was tall and brown and free of movement, and her voice was unlike all other voices. She reminded me vaguely at times, by a poise of her head, by an inflection of her matchless voice, by a look in her great wondering trustful eyes, of some other woman of whom

I could at that time recollect nothing more than that I had somewhere seen someone with such characteristics. Altogether, then, this superb English girl was rapidly coming to mean more to me than I dared to admit to myself, when, after a month of almost constant intercourse with her, we were suddenly separated, as I feared at the time, forever. I had of course not so much as formulated an idea of my true feelings toward Miss Leighton, still less had I in any way consciously led her to imagine that my manifest delight in her companionship came of any deeper feeling than that of our exceptional similarity of tastes and views on life and truth and beauty; but for all that, as I soon discovered, that month had wrought a fundamental change in the nature of Edward Templeton and, by implication, in that of Ethelbert Croft. I was now to find myself hungering for the love of woman. In all of its fullest and fiercest force I began to feel the primal instinct of sex. I grew aware of the emptiness and incompleteness of my life. I saw the real meaning of the emotional and sentimental tidal waves which from time to time had swept across the arid desert which I at last knew was my life. In short, I loved Gertrude Leighton with the dammed-up intensity of a nature intended to expand the fullest but which I had suppressed and cramped by a fancied devotion to intellectual ends.

On the morning of the first day of September I woke with an inexplicable sense of strangeness. At first I thought that this was due to a very vivid dream

which I had had just before waking, but as the morning wore on toward noon and I found it impossible to throw off the feeling that I had recently been in Paris, that a man by the name of Freycinet had there killed me, that another by the name of de Moulin had something to do with it, and that in some horrible way I was not myself at all, I naturally became alarmed about my sanity and decided to confide in Ashburton and to seek the advice of some Dresden specialist.

Ashburton, I found, had gone out early; Mrs. Ashburton was enjoying one of her headaches and could not be seen, and Miss Leighton, immensely to my astonishment and regret had gone off to visit friends in Berlin. I was trying to determine what I would best do to rid myself of the troublesome effects of the ridiculous dream, when a telegram was handed to me, and I tore it open with an uncanny feeling that in some mysterious way it would throw light upon my unaccountable condition. It did so! It was signed "de Moulin," the chap of whom I had never heard until I dreamed of him that very morning; and it merely said, "Meet Freycinet and me in the billiard-room of the Europaeischerhof at noon to-day!"

My astonishment may be imagined. I had had a peculiarly weird and gruesome dream in my bed, and now the two men implicated in my dreamed-of murder, and of whom I had no knowledge whatsoever except that I had dreamed of them, had telegraphed to me, bidding me meet them at noon! It was already

quarter to twelve, so I hurried down the Prager-strasse to the hotel named by my ghostly correspondents, and reached the billiard-room just as the bells in the steeples were ringing the hour. Nobody was there, so I sat down to wait. I then became conscious of a mysterious fellow who seemed to lurk in the back of my brain somewhere, and who peered through my consciousness as though he had the freedom of the city of my thoughts. He appeared to be a stranger to me, Templeton, but perfectly familiar with the brain-edifice into which he did not hesitate to enter. By degrees I came to see that it was this casual visitor in my mind who was killed by the two men for whom I was waiting, and I was nearing a state of mind bordering upon actual terror, when, to my infinite relief, Ashburton sauntered in and challenged me to a game at billiards.

I gladly accepted the challenge, for I felt that unless I could divert my mind from the morbid thoughts which had filled it all day, I must surely go off my head. We were selecting a table, and I was standing with my back to Ashburton who was taking, as I thought, a cue down from the rack, when I suddenly became faint. A sort of lurid vapour filled the room for an instant, I reeled with dizziness, and the next moment I underwent a radical change of being. I knew myself to be Croft, and even the memory of any such man as Templeton faded from my mind. In place of "Ashburton" I now found that my travelling companion of the past month was none other than Freycinet, and while he was

still laughing at my bewilderment de Moulin came in and we all had no end of amusement in talking over my experiences while under the hypnotic control of Freycinet.

That evening we celebrated the return of Ethelbert Croft to the glimpses of the moon, Madame Freycinet—the erstwhile Mrs. Ashburton—kindly suspending the headache long enough to join us at dinner. As for Miss Leighton; she had disappeared, and I of course remembered nothing about her. We all left for Paris the next morning, where Yznaga was anxiously awaiting us. I was soon quite at home once more in my brain, and eagerly discussing the results of my recent exile and the tremendously important steps about to be taken. Then at last, on the 14th of September, Yznaga told me that all was ready and that on the following day I would begin my solitary journey through the awful untrod depths of the mystery of personal existence, to blaze the way, if way there should be found to be, for all those who might hereafter wish to flee from “what I am” to the immeasurably nobler and happier “what I desire to be!”

CHAPTER XVIII

I TRUST that no reader of these pages has harboured the idea that I for one moment supposed that he or she has accepted all I have here set down. If the very Faculty and other men of unquestioned learning have joined in the universal chorus of derision which met my own and Steinmetz's and Yznaga's sworn statements, it is not likely that the average reader, sharing our common British inheritance of exclusive possession of common sense, will permit himself to be cozened into "swallowing" these immense truths. This leads me to say, that if what has already been stated in the course of this story has seemed to be beyond belief, what is now to follow must be thought to be absolutely incredible.

Therefore, the reader might as well stop right here and waste no more time over a tale so preposterous. For the benefit of such as may desire to see the thing through, however, I now propose to clear up some possible misapprehensions. The experiences about to be related might very naturally lead many to suppose that I, by reason of some abnormal or singular or even degenerate characteristics, proved to be easily susceptible to the influences brought to bear upon me—influences which the robustly minded and self-reliant reader imagines

that he could have as easily resisted. Lest it be thought, therefore, that I am of an especially sensitive or hysterical temperament, I shall now give a brief but mercilessly straightforward history of my life up to the time of my entering upon an experience destined to have so fateful an effect upon me, and, as I profoundly believe, on the whole human race eventually.

I was born in Madras, India, the seventh son of an English father and a mother of unmixed Portuguese descent. My mother wanted a girl, and my father—poor old harness-chafed and over-worked Pater!—wanted, I fear, nobody just then, certainly not another recruit for the small regiment of sallow little lads whom he had, at who knows what cost in cash and heart-stuff, to keep sending Home to England to be educated. I fancy that from my mother whose ancestors were all Catholics I inherited those early religious and mystical tendencies which were speedily and effectively knocked out of me once I was in an English school. Mother died when I was only four years old, so that I do not think that she had any very marked influence in the formation of my character. As was also the case with my brothers who had preceded me to England, when I bade poor Daddy good-bye at the pier in Calcutta it was forever, for that methodical cog in the great never-resting machine of the India Civil Service wore out after grinding away at the killing routine—during the last years a lonely and broken man—for a quarter of a century. His death was duly gazetted, and his place

in the machine was eagerly taken by the cog next in order of "promotion."

My two eldest brothers were so happy as to be sent to Rugby—Pater's old school—but this advantage, alas, came to nothing, as they were drowned by the capsizing of a small yacht, in their last long vacation. When the regiment of lads kept on increasing, to four, then to six and seven, it was impossible to give them all the benefit of a great public school education; so they were placed with a certain Doctor Brainhall, rector of the village in dullest Somersetshire where Pater was born and where, at the old home, his only sister, our Aunt Eunice, vegetated and dreamed of the golden days coming when "her boys" were to make a great stir in the world. Thither I also was sent when I was seven years old.

Up to this point my career surely presents no very striking features nor evidence of hereditary or environmental influences likely to render me peculiarly susceptible to superstition, or liable to hallucination. From old Bramhall's my brothers scattered in good time, to the Royal Engineers, to clerkships in the city, and two of them to a tea plantation in Ceylon owned by an old schoolmate of Pater's. We boys must have inherited father's methodical and unimaginative devotion to humdrum duty, for up to the present time all of my brothers have moved along their several grooves so noiselessly that none of them has ever been heard of by the great world.

I decided upon a medical career—in order to head off a conjoined effort of all and sundry to induce me to go into the church; and when I was sixteen I was packed off to the little laboratory of a chemist in Bristol, from whom I picked up nothing of much value, except a final and enthusiastic determination to persevere in scientific study. I spent three years with this worthy apothecary, and it was largely through his interest in me and practically through his willingness to assist me financially, that I happily was able to go to Oxford whence I graduated in my twenty-third year.

Up to that time I am not aware that I experienced any very marked change in my religious and moral views. I performed with considerable regularity the duties of a member of the Church of England, and my young head was untroubled by any of the then rampant scientific and philosophical objections to revealed religion. But my departure from Oxford and sojourn in Vienna and other capitals proved most unsettling to my views and principles. So long as the traditional “conscience” which I had inherited and imbibed exerted its sway over my will I tried to live—with the success, I fancy, of most young men—an unnatural life the consequent departures from which were the cause of great mental anguish and grave physical evils. When at last my mind had come to acknowledge no guide but nature, and to respect no laws but those of health I secured both peace of heart and soundness of body by shaping my life on the only “divine” prin-

ciples—those of nature. I became a sane, rational, perfectly natural being. I did those things which, according to Aunt Eunice, I ought not to have done; and left undone those things which, still according to my aunt, I ought to have done; but by the powers! I cannot say that there was “no health in me,” because, as a matter of robustest fact, my health was perfect in body and mind. In truth, it was owing to my being in perfect health that I finally was able to emancipate myself from the tyranny of my own former “self”; it was because of my doing and not doing things in contravention of the Aunt Eunice view of “morality” and life that I came to be the happy and sensible and healthy man I was.

Intellectually, then, I stood with the advocates of the newer and advanced thought in science and philosophy; and emotionally, I fancy that I was not different from the average ambitious young man who subordinates the romance of youth to the more practical considerations having to do with the laying of the foundations of a career or a fortune. What love affairs I may have had were of the most transient and superficial sort, since my inexorable determination not to marry until I had achieved a secure place in my chosen profession had the effect of nipping in the bud any threatening emotion connected with any particular woman. Woman as woman did, I confess, however, inspire me with sentiments and desires proper to a healthy and, I hope, decent young fellow. Like so many other men of

science, I was thus gradually building the cloister walls of celibacy about myself with no real intention to do so, and before I knew that I was not always going to be young I found myself a bachelor and a bit of a recluse well over the doorstep of middle life.

For the rest, I cannot see wherein I differed from other men placed in circumstances at all resembling mine. I smoked, I frequented the theatres, I read and dearly loved novels, I rubbed elbows with all sorts and conditions of men, I felt a genuine interest in current affairs, and lastly, I shunned and abhorred quite as intensely, I believe, as most Englishmen do, the eccentric, the *outré*, the sensational and theatrical in thought and conduct.

From all of this it will, I trust, be seen that I pretend to no unusual powers, psychic or physical, in any way whatsoever; but, on the contrary, I emphatically repudiate as a gross libel the insinuations recently made, that I am in some way darkly hinted at a man of peculiar, not to say neurotic, temperament, and hence one only too likely to succumb to hallucination or other mental obliquity.

Such, then, was the man who now happened to be hit upon by fate to lead the way across the borders of so-called personality into the dim outer region whence the Ego suddenly seems to emerge and whither it as suddenly vanishes; the man destined to offer his brain as the fulcrum on which genius was to lay the irresistible

lever of truth in order to wrench from off its immemorial foundations the throne of the tyrant—SELF!

“To-morrow, my dear friend,” said Doctor Yznaga to me, “to-morrow we begin. So, my dear fellow, take my advice, and go to a theatre or go and pass the evening with those best able to amuse you and to take your mind away from thoughts of the darkness which is about to close in about your brain for a while.”

As good luck would have it, I was invited to dine that night with Mme. Ardor who, if anyone in Paris could amuse and divert a man on the brink of the ultimate mysteries, could certainly do so.

CHAPTER XIX

ONE thing after another delayed me during the late afternoon, so that when at last I was able to dress I found that I had barely time to reach Mme. Ardot's hotel in season for dinner, to say nothing of the little gathering which always preceded her unique little dinner parties. I had met M. Ardot when he was ambassador of France at Madrid, and as I had become quite friendly with him and his amiable wife I presumed upon our intimacy in my present predicament and telephoned that I had been delayed but would, with their gracious permission, come as soon as possible. This permission was cordially extended—I was to be the "lion" of the occasion, monsieur was good enough to say—and accordingly I made what haste I could and was soon tearing along in a rickety *fiacre* on my way to M. Ardot's hotel just off the Champs Élysées.

On dashing around a corner, alas, either my own cocher or the chauffeur of an automobile which came snorting down the boulevard bungled, for there was a crash, and I found myself in the street, not hurt but decidedly shaken as to my bones and ruffled as to my temper. Apologies and explanations having been made and accepted by all parties, I took another cab, and without further adventure finally reached the house

fully a quarter of an hour after my patient hosts, despairing of me, had given the company some excuse for the non-appearance of the lion, and gone in to dinner.

M. Ardor came bustling out to greet me with his serviette in his hand, and tut, tut, tutting at my blushing apologies, led me in triumph to the dining-room. A rather large company was seated at the brilliant table, and madame graciously placed me at her right after presenting me with some pretty compliment, to the party *in globo*. For some few minutes I was too much embarrassed to look about me, contenting myself with giving my hostess a graphic account of the untoward events and culminating accident which had made me so unpardonably late. But after a while, when Mme. Ardor turned to speak to the queer little old chap with the many decorations sitting at her left, I cast a glance of reconnaissance down the long table and was astonished to see Lord Torbeth sitting half-way down on the opposite side.

He caught my eye and smiled at my surprise, and immediately gave me a significant look and almost imperceptibly nodded his head in the direction of the woman who sat at the left hand of M. Ardor and consequently on the same side of the table as myself. I interpreted this to mean that the woman to whom he referred was Lady Torbeth, and for some unaccountable reason my feeling was not at all the one of unmingled pleasure which I had always anticipated it would be

when at last I should meet the woman who had brought me to my present position of unprecedented expectation and tense anxiety. Perhaps this was owing to the fact that both de Moulin and Yznaga had told me repeatedly that it would be most injudicious for me to yield to Lady Torbeth's natural wish to meet me and talk over the ordeal to which I was about to submit on her behalf. They had given me no reason for their singular opinion, and, in fact, ever since the hypnotic experience through which I had passed they carefully avoided mentioning her at all and cautioned me against allowing my thoughts to dwell on her. With every wish to facilitate their plans looking to the success of the delicate and awful experiments now to be made I none the less felt some resentment at this seemingly childish determination on their part to prevent me from becoming acquainted with the one woman in the world who necessarily stood in a relation to me utterly absorbing and unique.

It was with mischievous delight, therefore, that I found that in some inexplicable way their vigilance had been circumvented and my earnest desire—Lord Torbeth also felt as I did in the matter—was now to be gratified. From her position at the table I was unable to catch even a side glimpse of Lady Torbeth's face, but as the dinner was already half over and Mme. Ardot's dinners were always deliciously simple and short, I knew that in half an hour at most I would see the viscountess rise with the other women, and then some excuse could readily be found for leaving

the cigars and liqueurs and joining the ladies in the salon.

My efforts to re-establish communication with Lord Torbeth proved unsuccessful, for he seemed purposely to avoid looking in my direction, so that I was compelled to eat and wait. Finally the dinner came to an end and Mme. Ardot rose. As I turned somewhat rudely to look at the women rising on my side of the table, I saw that Lord Torbeth was watching me with a curious expression on his calm and undemonstrative face. Three women stood up and began to follow the hostess toward the door. As two of these were elderly and evidently not English, I was forced to accept the third one as the viscountess; but I did so with great reluctance. The woman who now passed before me was as different from the one whom I had pictured to myself as it was possible for her to be. She was above the average height and her carriage, air, style, and whole bearing lacked the stateliness and distinction with which I had endowed the heroine of my life adventure. But if she lacked these queenly and commanding qualities, the girl—she looked not more than five or six and twenty—was certainly the sweetest and most unaffected creature I had ever seen. Her dress was almost rural in its simplicity. She wore no jewels. Her luxuriant chestnut hair was coiled loosely above her splendid neck in a way to bring out the noble head. Her eyes were of some undecided hue which I could not determine, and her nose and mouth, while youthful and pleasing,

would not have commended themselves to an artist. She was, in short, a simple English girl whose expression of purity and gentleness bore no traces of the storms of passion and spiritual unrest which had raged within her. But to a degree certainly exquisite this woman fulfilled the description of his "real wife" given me by Lord Torbeth. It was easy to see what blessed results had attended the treatment already given her by de Moulin and Freycinet—would that these might only be lasting without those further efforts now, alas, thought necessary!

Just as she reached the door she turned and sent some unspoken message to her husband, and as she turned I caught her eye. I fairly rose to my feet. My memory had not recovered with my other faculties after my month-long exile under Freycinet's hypnotic control of my brain, but as our eyes met I felt in my inmost soul that this woman and I had looked into each other's eyes before. Vague, chaotic, terrifying reminiscences seemed to crowd into the misty spaces where had formerly resided my memory, but they interfered with one another and blurred each other as do the slides in a stereopticon when introduced simultaneously. I fell back into my chair and tried to turn away from the haunting visions of another, of possibly more than one other woman who resembled Lady Torbeth. Then she passed out with the other women. I argued myself into the conviction that my agitation was due solely to some fancied likeness, but as I lit my

cigar and chatted with the men around me I was conscious of a persistent image in my sub-mental self, that this woman and I were known to each other—was it in a previous incarnation as the theosophists would say?—and I knew as certainly as I had ever known anything, that between Lady Torbeth and myself there was an elemental, a fundamental spiritual oneness.

In about a quarter of an hour the talk had become general, the queer little old gentleman—a Russian diplomat he proved to be—entertaining the company with some witty story, and Lord Torbeth, watching his opportunity, came around to the seat beside me and we began a quiet chat in an undertone.

“We shall be leaving before the music,” he said. “and it was Lady Torbeth’s earnest wish as well as my own very positive hope that you will come to our apartment with us—to-morrow would be too late, since I understand the awful work begins to-morrow.”

“Dear me!” I exclaimed, “I’m afraid that as I came late, I can hardly manage to run away early, especially as monsieur tells me that the dinner was given in my honour; but I’ll try. How late would it be proper for me to call at your apartment?”

“Come when you can—one, two, three o’clock in the morning, if you like, only be sure to come. The viscountess has gained the point of seeing you here only with infinite finesse and really considerable difficulty, and she would never feel at ease if she did not have at least a few minutes’ talk with you—so come.”

I promised to do so and was happily able to convince my hostess that certain very trying professional duty in the morning made it really very necessary that I leave early. Accordingly, while a Polish pianist was in the midst of a long number, Mme. Ardot signalled to me, and I slipped out unobserved at a side door and got away from the house at about eleven o'clock. In twenty minutes I was admitted to the apartments of Lord Torbeth, and the next moment the viscountess came in from the adjoining room and we were standing face to face.

While Lord Torbeth was saying some very embarrassing things about the unique service—"the unspeakable sacrifice," he called it—that I was going to make for her, the glorious woman burst into tears and grasped my hand impulsively and before I could demur she kissed it fervently several times. I cannot trust myself to try to relate all that was said during that most singular and pathetic interview. With every conceivable argument the viscountess—my glimpse of her at the table of Mme. Ardot had failed to reveal the depths of nobility and sweetness now manifested by her—the viscountess, I say, now endeavoured to dissuade me from venturing into "that dim, dreadful, ghostly land where are neither flowers nor light nor home nor anything we love and know, but only the phantom of our baser selves which come and go at will, we know not why nor how."

I laughed at her fears and assured her that I went

with all my heart and soul into the mists of life to serve science by happily serving her. Lord Torbeth also did much toward bringing her to a more reasonable and contented frame of mind, and before I took my departure we were all laughing and discussing the splendid triumphs of science which had now made it possible to banish for ever the thought and the images and the emotions which had heretofore so sorely harassed the human soul.

As I bade them good-bye the viscountess took my hand and said, "Promise me, oh, do promise me, won't you, that if we meet beyond the veil of the real life—you know, I have been living an unreal life for over a month—that if we happen to meet in the mist whither we are to be sent out, that you will force me to recognise you, that you will not leave me alone amid the shadows! It may be for ever, you know; so stay with me, touch my heart so that I shall know who you are and that I am not quite alone."

Her words and still more her manner sent a thrill of strange horror through me, and Lord Torbeth also was profoundly moved. I had never before seen him betray emotion, and the sight was almost unbearable.

"Come, dearest," he said when he could speak, "we are keeping Mr. Croft from the rest that he so much needs. Good-bye, old man, and God bless you!"

The next moment I was in the street. I had met Lady Torbeth for the first—would it be the last time as well?—in my life!

CHAPTER XX

On arriving at de Moulin's house on the following morning I was not a little pleased to find that a considerable number of men prominent in the world of science had assembled to witness the initial steps in the daring experiments now about to be made. Besides Yznaga and de Moulin and Freycinet, I noted the presence of Wolff of Heidelberg whom I had never met personally before, and of my old and best of friends, Steinmetz and Heredia. Also there were some less famous of the younger investigators. The gathering, in short, probably comprised all that is greatest in advanced thought in the domain of psychophysics.

These gentlemen were smoking and discussing the various aspects of the impending experiments when I joined them, and I at once became the target for innumerable questions most of which I was quite unprepared to answer. My constantly repeated statement, that they must ask Yznaga, finally led to a general demand that he make a full explanation of what had already been done and of the steps which it was proposed to take. Accordingly, the reticent old thinker reluctantly consented, but stipulating first that de Moulin give an account of the case up to the present. After this,



"As the case was gradually unfolded to them I watched the faces of the men sitting in a circle around me."



Yznaga promised, he would state what he intended to attempt to achieve. As the case was gradually unfolded to them I watched the faces of the men sitting in a circle around me, and it was clear that they gave only a very guarded acceptance to more than one of the claims and theories advanced.

De Moulin spoke first. He said: "While my own part in this most interesting case is merely that of an operator acting under the absolute direction of Yznaga, I have become so familiar with the questions involved that it may not be presumptuous in me if I try to give you briefly a history of it. As you already know, our friend Croft is not the principal subject of this series of proposed experiments, his gallant, or I might say, his heroic rôle being that of one who has offered his brain for the purpose of enabling us to make certain preliminary tentative tests which, if they be successful, will open the way for the crucial experiments to be made later on the brain of the English woman who is the real subject of Yznaga's present efforts. This woman—her identity is very properly withheld—is a married woman aged twenty-eight, of normal physical development, good education, perfectly sound constitution, and—this is of course what interests us—of an extraordinarily sensitive psychic temperament. Up to and for some little time after her marriage—to a gentleman of unusual sanity and of the loftiest character—she reflected in her character the entirely wholesome influences which—"

"Oh, look here, de Moulin," broke in Steinmetz

winking at me, "aren't you poaching on Yznaga's preserves a bit? You were to tell us about what was done with Croft, you know, and I for one insist that you stick to that. I may state for your benefit, gentlemen, that de Moulin's fondness for the sound of his own voice is so immense, and his knowledge of psychology is so profound that if we allow him to go on he will absorb all of the subject—yes, and no contemptible portion of the remainder of our natural lives!"

After the laugh with which this sally was received had ended, de Moulin shouted, "That's a fact, Steinmetz. I was forgetting that Croft was my text, wasn't I? Well, I confess that I know very little about what was done to him; so I resign in favour of Freycinet who, I understand, has something delicious up his sleeve in this connection."

"Delighted!" exclaimed Freycinet, "but I give you fair warning, Croft, that what I shall say may be news to you."

Again the laugh was general, and Yznaga and de Moulin exchanged significant looks which I did not fail to detect.

"Very well then," went on Freycinet with twinkling eyes, "before proceeding to banish the charming Croft whom we all admire so much, it was thought proper to ascertain what sort of a bird the real Croft might be—the Croft who would reside in this dome-like temple"—here he tapped my forehead—"if no external circumstances prevented! I assure you, gentlemen, the result

was startling. I suppressed the Croft known to us, and invited the unknown only original Croft to occupy the temporarily vacated premises. And he turned out to be a joy! We think of our Croft as a sedate, studious monk vowed to a life of celibacy and aloofness from the fair, immured in the austere cloisters of thought whither neither the darts of Cupid nor the slings and arrows of the outrageous wiles of even a widow can penetrate. How shall you believe me when I tell you that, as a matter of painful fact, the real, aboriginal and essential Croft is a gay Lothario whose amorous susceptibility compelled Madame Freycinet and myself to keep the closest watch over the romantic gallant! You will now feel no surprise at Yznaga's prudent refusal to allow our cooing Croft to so much as see the fair lady on whose behalf he is about to undertake this knightly emprise."

A shout went around the circle when Freycinet finished. Every man there knew me for an unemotional creature with no thought beyond the laboratory and no passion save for science. Yznaga and Steinmetz especially enjoyed Freycinet's humour, for they had tried in vain in earlier days to force me into interests and associations proper to a young and sound human animal.

"So you have all been scheming to prevent me seeing the lady, have you? Permit me to inform you that I have met her!" I announced with a great show of triumph.

The effect of my simple words was peculiar. Yznaga shot an anxious look at de Moulin, and then both of them sent urgent glances of inquiry to Freycinet. The three got their heads together and had a short whispered conference which puzzled me. When they rejoined the group it was clear that they had come to the conclusion that I was only trying to annoy them; so I felt bound to disabuse their minds of this mistake.

"But I really have seen and conversed with the lady, I tell you," I said with great earnestness to Yznaga.

"Yes, yes, we are aware of that," he replied looking knowingly at de Moulin and raising his expressive shoulders and smiling quietly to himself.

The talk becoming general, some of the younger men ventured to interpose hypothetical objections and to ask searching questions. One of them—a rising young fellow from Edinburgh—with your true Scot's grip on the links of an argument, then asked, "But, sir, if Freycinet has thus been able to expel Croft and to install another character in his brain by simply subjecting him to hypnotic control, why do you not adopt the same means to effect the desired alteration in the character of the English woman?"

"Because," replied Yznaga trying not to show impatience, "because, my dear young sir, my contention is not that we can suspend states or phases of character and personality, but that we can obliterate one personality and substitute another for it permanently. Sleep, drugs, delirium, suggestion, are well known to be suffi-

cient agents for suspending and interchanging characteristics temporarily. My point, sir, is a different, a vastly more vital one than this! I maintain that it is possible to induce cerebral conditions which *must*—not which may—which must result in the permanent and actual creation of the new and desired personality, which latter will continue to be whatever we make it until by a similar course of treatment some other character may be produced.”

As time was slipping by, all present united in begging the great man to proceed at once with his elucidation of principles so that the serious work on my brain might be begun. All jocularities subsided immediately when Yznaga, looking like another Moses about to lead a greater Israel out of bondage, rose to address us. For over two hours he held us all spell-bound.

In the first draft of this story I gave a *resumé* of Yznaga's magnificent oration, keeping it as free as possible from technicalities; but a shrewd critic who read the advance sheets reminded me that I was writing for a public certain to grow impatient if kept waiting for the action to go on, by having to wade through a lengthy and necessarily dry account of the old doctor's psychological theories.

“Tell us what Yznaga did, not what he said,” wrote my astute critic, so without further delay I proceed to do so. But really, you know, if it be true that the public is bored by metaphysics, there must be something rotten in Denmark.

CHAPTER XXI

BEFORE we adjourned to de Moulin's laboratory—a perfectly appointed clinical theatre and operating-room—I was subjected to a searching examination as to my mental and bodily condition, and the sworn statement signed by eighteen of the foremost specialists of the world declared me to be of sound mind and otherwise in perfect health. Considering the weight of this august commission "*de inquirendo lunatico*" it is amusing to find that a petty board of parish surgeons in a provincial cathedral town in England dared later to declare that I was at this very time "manifestly of unsound mind and a dangerous lunatic!" One fancies that he can detect the master mind of the renowned Bompus back of that learned announcement.

I then drew up and signed in the presence of all the rest a solemn declaration that I submitted to the proposed treatment of my own free will and accord and actuated neither by fear nor the hope of obtaining any reward, save the knowledge that I had done science some service. Later the Bompus document recited that I was clearly coerced into submitting to the diabolical treatment by my well-known dread of Yznaga's hypnotic powers, as well as by the idea that my foolhardiness might bring me notoriety!

The papers having been duly witnessed by a notary, and all present having shaken my hand and expressed the hope that I would pass safely through the ordeal and be speedily restored to them the same man whom they were kind enough to say they loved, I was placed in a refreshing sleep by Freycinet, in which I remained not longer than half an hour. When I awoke I saw that active preparations had been making during my nap. In the centre of the room had been placed an adjustable operating chair, and about this I noticed considerable apparatus—batteries, X-ray tubes, my own radium instruments, vibrators, psychometers, and innumerable other delicate instruments connected with the science of the brain and nervous system.

“We are ready,” said Yznaga gently, and the murmur of voices along the seats in the amphitheatre ceased.

Yznaga stood at my right and de Moulin and Steinmetz at my left, with Freycinet somewhere behind me. These once more bade me fear nothing, and shook my hand affectionately. I whispered to Yznaga that I was all ready—and they began!

Of course I shall now have to narrate what these unimpeachable witnesses afterwards told me had occurred, since I myself was very soon unable to observe what passed—in my character of Doctor Croft, that is. I was at once made to recline in the chair, and after Yznaga had fussed about among the various apparatus for some time, he cleared his voice and made

another little speech, this time having to do solely with the measureless importance to the human race of the results certain to follow the success of the stupendous effort now to be made. I shared the nervousness and impatience of the others, and was delighted when the poetic flow of the old Spaniard's soul finally ceased, and the great transaction commenced.

They adjusted upon my head the helmet-shaped contrivance used in applying radio-energy to the brain centres, and through electrodes held in my hands and applied to my ankles I perceived a gentle current passing into my body. Then the real work began.

Yznaga repeated slowly and with his thoughts intensely focussed the principal terms and phrases connected with the sciences which were my life-work, and told me to say each word after him as slowly and emphatically as I could, and to concentrate my whole mind in an effort to make each word-image as vivid as possible. His purpose was to suffuse the centres with the ideas inhering in the words and phrases. I did as he directed, and then went over the long list again and again until my mind was saturated with thoughts covering a large portion of my scientific knowledge. Meanwhile Freycinet kept close watch over me and exerted strenuous efforts to prevent the entrance of *any ideas whatsoever* not connected with science or with myself as a scientist. At a signal from Yznaga one of them—de Moulin, I believe—quickly turned off the electric current, and I was dimly conscious of

some sort of influence affecting various parts of my head. Yznaga was, of course, applying the rays of some one of the radio-active elements. The result was amazing. Within twenty minutes the whole area of memory covering my knowledge of the terms and ideas having to do with science had been blotted out or suppressed or, at all events, made inoperative!

"What is this?" asked Yznaga picking up one of the simplest and best known instruments from the table and holding it before me.

"I don't know, sir," I replied with surprise at his question.

"What? You do not know what this is, and yet you claim to be a surgeon?" he said with well simulated contempt.

"Pardon me," I replied, "but you are mistaken, sir. I am not a medical man. I have thought of becoming one, however, and may do so, but I have only very recently graduated from Oxford, you know."

Yznaga signalled to the company to bombard me with every conceivable question relating to any phase of my profession that they might think of, and for over an hour they did so. But all to no purpose. I did not remember a single technical term nor the name of the simplest facts known to a physician as such. Thus far, then, Yznaga's theory was sustained; I had been changed from a rather well informed middle aged medical practitioner to a young and ignorant fellow at the threshold of life. This staggering fact had been

brought about in me, as in the case of Pepita, by merely obliterating the accumulated word-images and idea-images comprising my professional stock in trade. But memory itself, considered apart from the special category of impressions selected for erasure, remained perfectly normal. I knew my name, read whatever they placed before me, gave a detailed account of my life (to the age of four and twenty), and, in short, was mentally as well equipped as ever. Doctor Ethelbert Croft, aged thirty-five, had quietly been annihilated—that was all!

For several hours I moved about among the company—all of them strangers to me now—and keenly enjoyed asking the learned man what they advised me to do in order to set about preparing for a medical career. This gave Yznaga just the opening that he wanted, for he had dreaded lest I show some hesitation about submitting to the numerous further operations necessary for my complete “personal” extermination. He strongly advised me, then, to be treated for the “lesion in my Broca’s centre,” that being, he assured me, the best possible way to fit myself for my profession. So I privately consulted some of the younger fellows, and they all expressed immense surprise at my not having had that lesion attended to. Without the faintest notion, of course, as to what it was all about, I then begged de Moulin to “fix up my Broca’s centre immediately,” assuring him that while I was unfortunately not at the moment in funds, an aunt of mine in Somerset would

no doubt remit his fee at the earliest possible moment. He agreed to repair my poor Broca's centre, although he was not, he told me, in the habit of administering "formaldehyde of such high voltage" on credit! They all roared at this, and I was delighted, supposing that their merriment was caused by their appreciation of de Moulin's magnanimity. After dinner—these amazingly hospitable medical chaps insisted on me stopping for it—we all went back into the clinic and I was treated for lesion in Broca's centre as I believed. As a matter of fact, this second operation wiped out all knowledge of the name "Torbeth" as well as of many thousands of other names and ideas. On the following day my emotional centres were treated, and scores of my temperamental and characteristic likes and dislikes, leanings and antipathies, tendencies and aversions, were radically altered or totally expunged from my memory-records.

At this stage it was deemed best to allow me to rest for a few days, and I went about like an emasculated or hollow shell of my former self with only the vaguest perception of my surroundings. The only clearly defined ideas that remained were a few disconnected ones relating to my boyhood. Acting upon one of these I wrote to Aunt Eunice to ask her to please send me half a sovereign for a secret purpose of which I would tell her when I came home for my next holiday. Her reply came in a few days and filled me with considerable surprise; but my mind was in too nebulous

a state for me to reason out anything, and anyhow, I forgot all about the matter in half an hour. Aunt Eunice had written:

"My dear Estelbert: My delay in answering your welcome little note is due to the fact that, through a singular slip of the pen, you addressed the letter to 'Croftleigh.' I can well understand this mistake, however, for I myself frequently made a like mistake when writing to your brother Tom. I had addressed letters to your 'poor father, Thomas Croft, Esq., The Lands and Registry Office, Calcutta,' once a week for over a quarter of a century, so that it was not strange, after all, that I should find my pen running into the same old address when writing to Tom, at Morton's Limited, Fenchurch Street, City—was it? As you ask, I am sending you herein the half sovereign, but surely you must have made another mistake in asking for this ridiculously small sum! You tell me nothing of yourself, nor of the success of your visit to that odd old Spanish medical man who, by the way, does not altogether please my old-fashioned English mind, you know. And what on earth do you mean by your 'next long vacation?' Altogether, your dear letter has the ring of those queer little begging epistles you used to write me from school. So I forgive its brevity and other faults—provided you follow it soon with a longer and more explicit one. Be a good boy and do remember to put on heavier underclothing now that these treacherous autumn days are here. As ever,
"Your devoted, AUNT EUNICE."

As I have said, in my then blissful state of mental inconsequence and ignorance this letter failed to impress me with the fact that something must be wrong with me, and I presently forgot all about it, simply pocketing the ten shillings with unquestioning satisfaction.

In a day or two more Yznaga proceeded with the

weird work of emptying still more completely my brain of whatever remained of correlated ideas, coming at last to the delicate task of expunging even the rudimentary images of the simplest sort. This was carried to a point which left my mind a total blank. Let there be no misunderstanding here. I was *not* reduced to a state of imbecility, for an idiot is incapable of forming what we call rational ideas, the evidences of the senses in his case having nothing whereon to make a lasting or even passing impression amounting to conscious idealisation. This was not at all the case with me. My brain was, as it were, a perfectly appointed dwelling with every convenience necessary for the comfort and use of a tenant; but there was *no tenant*! The agent of the premises had cleaned the house, and everything was in readiness for the incoming of whatever tenant he might decide to grant a lease to!

Yznaga had now the grim satisfaction of knowing that the negative part of his theory was fully sustained by the work already accomplished. In the case of Dolores Bueno he had proved his ability to shut up the greater part of the brain-edifice, leaving only certain rooms open for the use of the impoverished occupant. And in my own case he had succeeded in carrying this process of exclusion to completion. The entire brain-house was taken over from the former tenant, and thoroughly cleaned of all traces of his occupancy. All this was, however, only negative. The infinitely more delicate and significant work of introducing a new

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tenant remained to be done. And it was this task on which depended the whole value of the experiments being made on my brain.

Unless it could be shown that after expelling one personality completely another and totally different one could be established permanently in the vacant house of the brain, nothing more could of course be claimed for our theories than that it was within the power of science to suppress personality as a free agent, and to evict an undesirable tenant. But if this were all that science could accomplish, it was hardly to be expected that Lord Torbeth would countenance treatment of his wife's brain which could merely result in reducing it to a state of lightless and formless vacuity. Moreover, in the event of our failure to turn over the premises to an absolutely new and different owner, the *mortgage on the brain* would, as a matter of practical if not of theoretical fact, remain in full force!

But all of Yznaga's anxious fears were destined to be set at rest, for from the very first it proved to be perfectly feasible to set up on the *tabula rasa* of my blank mind the entire series of impressions, concepts, correlations, instincts and other rational functions of a wholly new personality. At Freycinet's suggestion, after a long and exhaustive discussion, it was decided to make the Edward Templeton who had been my hypnotic guest, the permanent resident in the brain recently vacated by Ethelbert Croft.

Accordingly, I was subjected daily to protracted

treatment resulting in the gradual setting up within my mind of all of the opinions, emotions, memories, tendencies and other characteristics proper to the purely fictitious personality of Edward Templeton. In about ten days I was to all intents and purposes Templeton, a gentleman of culture and property, with a taste for art and letters; in short, the very man whom Freycinet had introduced to my mind by hypnotic suggestion, only now this man was a free agent and acted and thought of his own motion. It will be seen that in order to equip a man of thirty-five with a complete set of memories and principles and traits sufficient practically to "make a man" of him required an almost superhuman effort and an immense amount of detail in the way of, as it were, pumping into his various brain centres the necessary thought-stuff.

There I was at last, none the less, Edward Templeton, Esquire, with a complete outfit of mental images and all the characteristics required for a successful performance of my new rôle!

"But, alas!" groaned Yznaga when the others drank his health and proclaimed his genius on the day that the last experiment was concluded; "Alas, my friends, the real work remains to be done; the awful difficulty still confronts us. We have banished Croft; we have created Templeton—but, oh, my God, can we now in turn expel Templeton and once more bring our dear Croft home from the abyss of nothingness to which we have exiled him?"


Steinmetz has told me that the old man's emotion was pathetic when he spoke of the awful possibility of their being unable to recall me from oblivion. All of them, said Steinmetz, went about with silent and anxious minds during the dreadful days before the attempt was to be made to bring me "home again."

"To-morrow we shall know," exclaimed Yznaga on the eve of the great day that was to determine whether or not Ethelbert Croft was ever again to occupy the brain over which he had formerly exercised rights as absolute as though he were himself the proprietor in fee simple and not a mere tenant.

Far into that night the assembled scientists—all had been summoned to witness the crucial test—far into the night they sat talking over the tremendous issue of the coming morning, all of them trying not to allow the rest to perceive the profound anxiety which each one felt. Yznaga spent the whole night closeted with de Moulin and Steinmetz, discussing every possible phase of the problem to be essayed in the morning. The eve of every great crisis drags unmercifully slow, and they have often told me that that gruesome night seemed to have no end. It did end, however, and after they had had coffee and rolls at six o'clock they proceeded to the operating-room, and I was sent for.

"Well? Well?" asked Yznaga of Freycinet who had been detailed to go and fetch me.

"He has disappeared!" cried Freycinet standing aghast at the door of the clinic.



CHAPTER XXII

It was true. I had disappeared. As if moved by forces of evil I suddenly conceived the idea of leaving de Moulin's house—I was, be it remembered, a gentleman of thirty-five in full possession of all his faculties—and before anyone was stirring on the fateful morning I slipped out of my room and made my escape, leaving a brief note of farewell for my very kind host. Little did I dream what lay ahead of me when I left Paris.

Fortunately, I had realised on some holdings of company shares just before leaving London, and this cash, amounting to close upon two thousand pounds, I now had with me; but that circumstance did not specially interest Templeton, for he, being a man of large fortune, could of course obtain funds at any moment by telegraphing his bankers. At the same time, the actual possession of so much cash enabled me to act with perfect freedom.

Almost my first thoughts upon "becoming" Templeton again were very naturally of Gertrude Leighton, of whom, quite as naturally, I had never thought during my intervening existence as Croft. Accordingly, on finding myself foot-free on the day that Yznaga and the others were intending to annihilate Templeton, in the character of that same person I took train for Dresden

where I hoped that I might either find Miss Leighton or get word of her present whereabouts.

Arriving in Dresden I put up at a pension in Christianstrasse, and the next day I introduced myself at a bank by depositing my snug little fortune. I explained that I was an English gentleman of leisure and thought of settling in Dresden, and that I would instruct my London bankers to turn over to them my funds and securities. They were most civil, one young English clerk especially finding my account of my home in Devonshire very interesting, since he himself came from the borders of Cornwall. The bank people introduced me to a house agent who could put me in the way of finding just such a villa as I said I wanted to purchase.

I called daily at the bank, and through my new Cornish friend I began to form delightful acquaintances with other English residents all of whom hailed my advent with great pleasure. Nightly I attended the opera, and spent my days making rather sentimental tours about the city and its environs so dear to me as the scenes of my former rambles with Miss Leighton. Of her, however, I could learn nothing. She had left the hotel at which we had stopped, as I already knew, before I myself had left; and neither there nor at the post-office could I get the slightest clue as to her subsequent movements. My disappointment was bitter, for I now realised that my happiness was bound up in this matchless girl, but I decided to stop in Dresden because no other place could possibly fill me with

such tender, if at the same time such sad, memories of her.

For some reason my London bankers were annoyingly slow in forwarding my funds, so that my purchase of a house was delayed. In passing, I will say that it would be interesting to know of what bankers I made my extraordinary request for those imaginary funds. Should they chance to see this book, I humbly beg they will accept my apologies and expressions of distinguished consideration.

Barring my failure to find Miss Leighton and the remissness of those London bankers, my life in Dresden proved to be exactly suited to a man of Edward Templeton's nice feeling and discriminating taste in music and art. I had passed a fortnight in a quiet enjoyment of the opportunities offered by the Saxon capital, when occurred that which was destined to bring me into the most painful situation and to very nearly wreck my life and blast my reputation.

I had been lunching with some new acquaintances among the officers of the Grenadiers, at their casino in the barracks overlooking the Alt Stadt, and had walked homeward across the square adjoining the royal palace, when just as I was about to pass under the arch into the lower end of the Prager-strasse an open carriage containing two ladies came driving from the direction of the gallery toward the narrow passageway. At the same instant two or three equipages from the palace emerged from the gate, the sentries stiffened like Jacks-

in-the-box to "attention!" pedestrians lifted their hats, and the mounted guard at the arch waved a warning to other vehicles to hold back until the royal carriages should have passed into the Platz.

This command stopped the carriage in which sat the two ladies, just at my side as I stood on the curb, and on glancing at them I observed that the younger of the two ladies was signalling violently to me behind her parasol by whose adroit manipulation she prevented the elder woman from seeing that she did so. I recognised her at once and with delirious joy. It was she! It was Gertrude Leighton, the woman who was never out of my heart.

I started with undisguised delight and was going to step to the side of the carriage, hat in hand, when Miss Leighton said sharply, "No, no, please don't let her see that you know me! She is deaf, but her eyes see everything. Where are you stopping, Mr. Templeton?"

"At number — Christian-strasse," I replied, too overjoyed to add that I was so.

"We're off now, but you will hear from me. Oh, it is so good to have you again!"

The royal carriages had now passed through the archway, and at a sign from the guard all the other vehicles began to move forward again. As far as I could see the carriage I noticed that Miss Leighton kept turning and smiling at me. Then, when they had finally passed out of sight I walked slowly to the Brühl-Terrace and sat there sipping beer and thinking about

this woman who now a second time had come into my life. Like the sudden flaming forth of a fire which has been smouldering for want of air, the passion which had tormented me after our previous sojourn in Dresden, but which I had controlled somewhat during my absence from her, broke out an even more fierce flame than before. It is true, as I recalled the sudden meeting in the Hofplatz I felt a rather disagreeable sensation of surprise at Miss Leighton's possible lack of delicacy in having shown such manifest delight on seeing me, and the fact that she evidently intended to communicate with me clandestinely caused me for a moment vaguely to fear something; but with a lover's conceit and in view of certain things which had occurred at Zermatt when we were there I soon banished all feeling except one of feverish impatience to hear from her and to see her again.

I dined at a restaurant and so did not get the note which Miss Leighton sent to my pension until I returned thither to dress for the opera. She had written:

"My dear Mr. Templeton: Come to me at once—any time! This evening, to-morrow morning or afternoon, whenever you can—only come! Where on earth have you been hiding from me? You promised that you would write to me; but I have had not a single word from nor of you. But, you see, 'it was to be!'—and here you are, or rather, here *we* are! Of course you must have guessed long ere this that what you and I are to each other is to be 'all there is' for both forever. In the instant that I had to study your dear face to-day I saw that you have not changed one bit—only to grow more dear to me; so come, come, come! As I am living quite alone—the old ogre with whom you saw me driving is only a neighbour—you may come

and go as you like, only be sure to avoid being seen coming by anybody who knows you, for Dresden is an awfully gossipy and scandal-loving place.

"Hoping to welcome you to-night or, at latest, to-morrow, I am,
Ever devotedly yours, G. L."

I was thunderstruck. It seemed incredible that the girl whose exquisite delicacy and nun-like purity had so impressed me before could tear aside the veil of modesty and reveal her passion in this way. But love is not logical. No end of reasons offered to prove that this sudden revelation was perfectly natural. Absence had served to fan the latent fires of her heart; in the dark-room of her silence she had—perhaps unwittingly—developed the negatives taken during those long days of our sweet fellowship; it might be that this frank avowal of feeling came from the very fact that she was innocent of the world's false modesty and pretense; and lastly, had not my own conduct in our previous acquaintance given her the right to think that I longed for her to confess that she returned the passion I gave her?

At all events, brushing aside whatever remained of my first feeling of surprise, my heart leaped forward to grasp the priceless treasure of this woman's love which was now evidently mine for the asking. Abandoning the idea of hearing the opera I sent off some excuse to the friends with whom I had expected to go, and knowing not nor caring to know more than that I loved her and that she was to be mine, I made my way to the address which Miss Leighton had given me in her note.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE apartment in which I found her living was a large one in a pretentious house in an eminently aristocratic neighbourhood, but on entering the rooms I could see that this could not be Miss Leighton's permanent home, for "to be let furnished" was written plainly all over the furniture, which was of that peculiar seedy, genteel sort which, oddly enough, one never thinks of buying, but which by an equally odd rule one invariably finds in a rented house.

The tidy English maid who admitted me told me that "her ladyship was expecting me and would receive me presently." "Her ladyship?" I asked myself. Was Gertrude Leighton a woman of title? The more I thought of all the circumstances connected with this fateful acquaintance the more I became conscious of an undefined foreboding, a vague repugnance to something not clearly perceived, but none the less felt, to be involved in it; but at the same time I also gloried in the thought that the dreams which I had cherished concerning this exquisitely lovely and singularly intellectual woman were now to be realised, and she was to be mine.

She ran into the room presently radiant with joy, her fresh, sweet, trustful face suffused with delight and eagerness and passion on seeing me waiting for her.

She held out both of her hands to grasp my own, and as she stood looking up at me with artless happiness and I realised that all those half-believed-in things that she had hinted at in Zermatt were now to be proved rapturously believable and true, I yielded to a sudden access of passion and stooped and kissed her brow. Instantly I recovered the control of myself and stepped back, avoiding the caress with which she seemed about to show that she had not resented my act.

"Thank God!" she cried, "so you *do* love, don't you? I used to think so when you used to look at me so strangely, but ever since then a thousand times each day I have doubted—you, everything, even my own existence. But now you have come to me—and we know, we *know!*"

Holding my hand she led me to a sofa and we sat and told each other what had happened since our last meeting, I, of course, drawing for my story from the "Life and Times of Edward Templeton," as edited for my benefit by Yznaga and de Moulin. Quite as though our love had reached the stage of perfect mutual understanding we spent the long evening in a heaven of sentiment, but as I walked homeward through the cold night air at midnight I could not altogether repress the feeling of uneasiness and unconfessed disapproval with which at first I had observed the change in Miss Leighton from a girl of childlike innocence to a woman of ardent and uncontrolled passion.

As it is not the purpose of this story to relate the

details of my amazing love affair, I shall not dwell upon this part of my life further than to state some facts pertinent to the proper subject of this history of the most significant discovery ever made by science. It will be necessary, however, for me to state the salient facts without reserve or regard for my own or Miss Leighton's feelings.

This woman, then, who had now become the object of my absorbing and, thank heaven, I can add, my honourable passion, I found to be quite the most remarkable character that I had ever known. As she related it to me her career was so extraordinary that I now wonder how I could have believed her story, which, nevertheless, I did absolutely believe.

She was, she told me, the child of cold, stern, and undemonstrative parents, who failed utterly to understand her passionate, idealist, romantic, and poetic nature. There had been no open quarrel, but she lived alone and away from home, it being understood that she was free to make whatever she could of a life blighted by most unfortunate home influences and family considerations. She yearned for love, for sympathy, for someone with whom to explore the deep things of life and thought and experience through music and art and travel. Our long, wonderful, mystical talks at Zermatt and here in Dresden had, she assured me, made her realise that at last she had found that "other soul" of whose existence she was as certain as she was of her own existence. If she now

seemed to be wanting in those lying, artificial, frequently fatal "womanly restraints" with which modesty and coyness are wont to belie a girl's true state of heart and mind, I must forgive her and remember only how terrible was her need of me, how absolute was my ability to fill her life with that fullness of living for which she had hungered.

We were daily, almost hourly, together after this first meeting, and as neither of us was generally known in Dresden society, this fact was not the occasion of any unpleasant comment, as far as I am aware. From the first it was understood that she was to return to England and endeavour to persuade her father to give his consent to our marriage, which consent, however, Gertrude feared might not be obtained, since her father had threatened to disown her if she should marry any other than the man—a certain nobleman whom she loathed—whom he had selected for her.

For the rest, our days were one long rhapsody of feeling, our long hours together at the gallery, our constant attendance at the opera and other musical events, our earnest talks on mysticism and art and life, all combining to make our companionship in every way a joy. If the superbly beautiful woman at times exposed me to terrible temptation and herself to almost certain scandal, I, on the other hand, felt the growing need to be on my guard and thus to extend to her amorous and emotional nature the protection of my own less demonstrative and passionate character. How long we might

have drifted along on the aimless current of the dream river which flowed idly in and out among the nameless sweets of our fool's paradise I do not know; but neither seemed disposed to end our present bliss and to provoke probable catastrophe by going to England and facing her people, although that step must be taken before the way would be open for our lawful union. For the present it was enough for us that we saw each other daily, that the hours were filled with dreams of endless happiness, undisturbed by any fears of the morrow.

We spent one glorious autumn day at Pilnitz visiting the curious Oriental palace where more than one memorable event of history took place, and returned to the city by water in the golden afternoon. I had never known her so profoundly responsive to every vibration of my unspoken sentiment as she was that day, and by the time that we reached the city both of us were in a state of dangerous emotional unrest. During the brief time that we were separated before dinner I dreaded but none the less longed for the hours that I would sit beside her at the opera, for music always sent us into the seventh heaven of feeling, and as fate would have it, the opera that night was to be *Tristan and Isolde*—the climax of passionate emotion possible to music.

Before the awful depths of the immortal third act had been revealed my soul was dizzily whirling about in the yawning vortex of passion, and when at last the overpowering climax of love was reached and the terrible

forces of passion sobbed themselves away on the harps at the close of the *Liebes Tod* I sat cold and dazed and wildly yearning for—what?

“Come,” she whispered to me after nearly everybody else had left the theatre and they were beginning to put out the lights.

I rose and followed her out into the night.

“Take me—I am yours,” she murmured when we were seated in the darkness of the carriage on our way to her apartment.

Let me hurry over the telling of what followed. I left her at her door, but not until we had arranged to end the lie of life by leaving early the next morning for America or the East or anywhere that we might never more hear of her people nor be holden of the tyranny of society, but be free to live and love and know the secrets of heaven together.

Then I walked home, my head in a chaotic whirl of desire and dread and feverish anticipation, and passed a sleepless night until, with the first grey of dawn I was out in the blessed air again and hurrying to the place where she was to meet me. I saw her standing just outside of the entrance of the Bohemian railway station, and ran to greet her.

CHAPTER XXIV

FOR some time after Freycinet made his stunning announcement none of the assembled scientists could believe it possible that I had really disappeared. A thorough search of the house and grounds was made, and when no trace of me could be found the fifteen or twenty men scattered over all Paris under Freycinet's directions to look for me. Every hotel and restaurant at which it was known or guessed that I had ever been was visited, and pickets were posted at each of the railway stations. My Paris banker was interviewed, but he stated that he had not seen me for a month. When the whole day had been spent in a fruitless search three of the bewildered men of science were despatched to England with explicit orders to exhaust every possible means of getting word of me while being extremely careful not to betray the fact that I, Croft, had been de-personalized and turned into Templeton.

The embarrassment of my poor friends was acute, for to avail themselves of the assistance of the police would be to publish the fact that they had deliberately deprived me of my personality and allowed me to wander forth into the world under false pretenses! They realised with horror that I would of course proclaim myself to be Templeton, and were anyone who knew

"me" as Croft to meet me, it must inevitably follow that I would be thought out of my head, and then would be certain to ensue a general alarm and the sensational report that they had "driven the poor fellow mad!"

On the day after my disappearance Lord and Lady Torbeth called at de Moulin's villa in Neuilly as previously arranged, to ascertain the success of the experiments in which they were so deeply interested. Yznaga received them, and he has told me that Lady Torbeth's grief on learning that I had wandered away while in the character of another, was truly pitiful. The viscount at once undertook the task of locating me, and to that end he hastened to London where, after personally ascertaining that I had not been seen either at my house or the club or by any of my known medical friends, he let the Duke of Ackerby, Tredwell, Doctor Burton and a few others of my closest friends into the secret, and these quietly hurried over to the Continent and dispersed to all of the cities where it was thought I might have taken myself.

The great difficulty which they experienced in carrying out this line of investigation was that none of them had the slightest idea of what the recently created and altogether problematical man Templeton might take it into his head to do. Had it been Croft for whom they were looking, it would have been comparatively easy to formulate a theory as to my probable conduct; I would almost certainly be heard of at one or other of a

score of laboratories, or they would be extremely likely to run me down at some one of the places which it was known that I always visited when on the Continent. But who could pretend to say where this complete stranger, Templeton, would betake himself? Who could make anything more than a hit or miss guess at what a man of whom they knew nothing might take a fancy to do? It was known, it is true, that they had furnished Templeton with an artistic and cultured mental apparatus, but it was quite impossible to predict what might follow the inrush of impressions made by environment on a mind whole areas of which were as virgin soil waiting the planting of the seeds of thought!

To make matters worse, Lord Torbeth wrote at the end of the week, that Dean Chelmsford, fairly crazy with chagrin at not being allowed to meddle with the proposed treatment of the viscountess, had lost his few remaining wits and had actually begun proceedings against the viscount by praying the courts to intervene on behalf of the viscountess who, the dean declared, had been criminally placed in some institution for the purpose of being subjected to treatment in a manner contrary to accepted medical practice.

"Under all the circumstances, therefore," wrote Lord Torbeth, "I have thought it best to return to England with the viscountess. After she and I have appeared at a number of dinners and other functions, and otherwise publicly shown that the very reverend gentleman

is in error, and that he and his bumptious Bompus are in a fair way to become famous as the supreme donkeys of the world, we can run back to Paris to secure the blessed relief awaiting Lady Torbeth at your hands. By that time, I feel confident, poor Croft will have returned to you; but even though he does not show up so soon, from what you tell me of your success so far in practically evicting 'him' and placing 'Templeton' in possession, I share my wife's impatience to have you 'cancel the mortgage' on her brain without further delay."

This unexpected turn in affairs not only withdrew Lord Torbeth from the active work of searching for me, but also made my immediate discovery a matter of the very gravest concern, since the excitement and discussion precipitated by the dean's preposterous action stirred the public to a high pitch of curiosity respecting me who was supposed to be at the bottom of the whole scandalous business. In all probability I would be sought by the police if Dean Chelmsford pressed his case, and this must of course result in inquiries being made of de Moulin and the other specialists with whom it was known that I associated.

Altogether, then, the situation was a critical one. Maddened by the thought that my unfortunate escape just at the wrong moment might frustrate his sublime efforts on man's behalf on the very eve of their triumphant success Yznaga wrote a confidential letter to

Lord Torbeth, in which he implored him to return at the earliest possible instant to Paris to continue the search for me, and going at great length into the reasons why every hour that I remained away heightened the danger of my being met by some of the enemy—with the result that I would be held to be insane and the victim of the very line of non-professional treatment to which it was intended to subject the viscountess and against which her father sought the intervention of the courts.

“So you see, my lord,” pleaded Yznaga, “that by the deplorable mischance of poor Croft’s untimely disappearance the public may be led into making a premature decision as to my glorious work, and in that event it is only too likely that we may be forcibly prevented from proceeding with the placing of your good lady in peaceable and permanent possession of her brain.”

No reply to this eloquent appeal was received for several days, and when at last one arrived Yznaga was thrown into the profoundest sorrow and amazement. Lord Torbeth’s answer was brief and curt, consisting merely of the statement that he declined to take any further interest in the matter; that he washed his hands of Croft and the proposed experiments; and that if any more communications were sent to him, he would turn them over to his solicitor!

At a council of war held immediately after the receipt of this astounding letter, it was decided that Yznaga

himself must hasten to London and secure at all costs an interview with the viscount. There was beyond all question now some malevolent influence at work, some influence of which they were ignorant. Yznaga must ascertain just what it was!

CHAPTER XXV

As I hurried forward to greet her I was struck by Gertrude's unaccountable air of distance and almost disdain; but I set this down to the very natural nervous strain under which she must have spent the night, and to the fact that she would properly be careful to give our meeting in so public a place the appearance of formality. Alas! Her first words shattered my theory as well as my hopes.

"Well, sir," she began in a cold, hard voice, "I am here as you requested me to be, but you must permit me to remind you that a gentleman would not have made any such request. And now, Mr. Templeton, be good enough to tell me in as few words as you can what it is that you wish me to do."

"Gertrude!" I exclaimed too dazed to say more.

"It is as I feared," she went on, "and I was a weak fool to listen to your suggestions. But God knows, I did think that you were a man of honour—I did, I did!"

"But what in God's name does all this mean?" I asked noticing with infinite relief that her look of frigid contempt was giving way to one of groping uncertainty not altogether free from a trace of her former passion for me.

"Don't keep me standing here where everybody can see what a little fool I am," she protested.

"No, by all means let me fetch a cab and take you home. We can talk quietly there. Wait here, darling," I hastened to reply and started to go and call a cab.

"Home?" she cried. "Don't you know that I live alone and that you may not come to me there? Mr. Templeton, you amaze me, you do really!"

"But you are ill; you must go home—we might talk in the cab, you know, and I need not enter your house," I pleaded, thinking only of getting her away, and not even attempting to guess at the explanation of her inexplicable outbreak.

She made no further objection, so I called the cab, and presently we were sitting side by side. I gave the cabby secret instructions to go by the most indirect route, to drive through the Grosser Garten, to go wherever he liked so long as he wasted time, and as he was to be paid by the hour, I counted upon a long enough time to fathom the cause of the sudden catastrophe which had overtaken me at the very moment of my deepest joy. But as it turned out, this precaution was unnecessary, for we were scarcely seated in the cab when Miss Leighton burst into tears and showed no displeasure when I put my arm about her and drew her head down upon my shoulder.

As soon as she was calm enough to speak she told me. She declared that she knew that God had cast her away, and that her lost soul must wander about in


darkness forever. She had deceived me, she said; her name was not Gertrude Leighton, but another which she told me that I had never heard before. In a wild, piteous, harrowing way she went on to tell me that her people were the kindest and most devoted in the world, and that it was her own wicked heart alone that had driven her away from a home where her every whim had been gratified and where time after time she had found forgiveness and forgetfulness waiting for her after her unspeakably vile departures from the path of virtue and propriety. In a way that broke my heart and filled me with a sense of loathing for myself she implored me to forgive her for having tempted me as she had done, and for the despicable way in which she had thought to save herself from my contempt by pretending when she met me that morning that it was she who had been sinned against. It was she—she who had placed herself in the shockingly indecent position of practically bidding for my love unhallowed by wedlock; it was she who had deliberately planned every step of the downward path into which she hoped to decoy me by her wiles. I was good and noble and magnanimous and would forgive her, but God never could forgive her, she could never forgive herself!

For an hour and in spite of my frantic protestations she ran on in this way, and when at last the conscience of the cabby caused him to end the drive, Gertrude would not let me leave her at her door, but insisted on me

taking her without a moment's delay to the house of the rector of the English church. I vigorously protested against this, urging her to wait until she had sufficiently regained her composure to enable her to consult the spiritual guide without exposing herself to unnecessary and inevitable misjudgment at his hands. But she would not hear of this. Her soul, she cried, was on the brink of hell, and unless she could get an assurance from a clergyman, that God might be induced to be merciful if she promised to be good all the rest of her life, she would go mad!

So there was nothing to be done but to seek the ghostly man's advice, and accordingly we drove to the rectory and I waited in the cab in a decidedly mixed state of mind while the wretched woman poured forth her soul and flung herself in desperation at the feet of God.

The next two days were frightful. At times I really feared that Gertrude had lost her mind. May I never more be called upon to witness the agony of a conscience held in the awful grip of the conviction that an eternity in hell is its certain doom! Nothing that I could say to her had the slightest effect. In fact, as she associated me with her latest departure from virtue, she seemed to wish me to remain with her solely for the purpose of forcing herself to remember how vile she was. It was as though she felt that she had seduced me from my previous state of angelic innocence, and she craved the gruesome opportunity to keep the victim of her villainy



constantly before her eyes, to the end that she might drink the dregs of remorse to the uttermost!

On the third day, however, when I reached her apartment, filled with tormenting anticipations of another day of wrought-up feelings and lacerated heart-strings, she threw open the door to welcome me—and it was not the same woman who had clung to me with sobs and importunings on the night before! No! Nor was it, furthermore, the Gertrude Leighton of the last few weeks, but that earlier Gertrude Leighton of our first acquaintance—the girl who moved about wrapped, as it were, in a luminous mist of purity, the fairest, most innocent, most exquisitely sensitive and refined creature in the world!

Fearful lest the apparition should vanish at a word, I made no comment, but stood looking at her and wondering whether she herself was conscious of the ineffably uplifting change that had taken place in whole self over night. Her first words reassured me. She knew nothing about the change, or rather she had absolutely forgotten the conscience-racked wretch of the last few days as well as the voluptuous creature of passion of the last few weeks! She knew only her own sweet, winsome, mystical self!

In my unutterable delight I sprang forward to fold her in my arms, but quite in the dear old way that had so charmed me when I first met her she smiled at me and put up a hand in modest but not reproving protest. From that blessed hour on our love—flowing smooth and

pure and deep in the channels of self-control and patient waiting for the right to taste—was one long, nameless, idyllic comradeship of two souls perfectly attuned to one another and to the larger and fundamental harmonies of nature and of truth.

Relieved now of the necessity to be on guard over her passions as well as over my own impulses, I relaxed the care with which heretofore I had arranged for our little excursions abroad, and we went freely wherever fancy led us. Conscious of our own moral rectitude we acted as though the world would take us at our own valuation and refrain from inferring evil where no evil was. We dined openly on the Brühl-Terrace and at innumerable little hostelries in the villages which lie scattered so picturesquely on all sides of Dresden. We drove out and rode together, we took long walks into the country, we spent most of the days and all of the evenings together. She had written home to beg the permission of her father to allow her to engage herself to me, and pending a reply we refrained even when we were safe from any possible observation, from presuming to take the liberties of those betrothed.

At the close of one of our most happy days we were dining on the Terrace and I had just called her attention to something that the orchestra was beginning to play, when Gertrude sprang to her feet and her face became so ashy that I feared that she was going to swoon.

"Quick! Turn from me—seem not to be with me! There is my father!" she gasped.

I was so completely taken by surprise that I could do nothing but what she bade me do, not even to make an effort to see the man whom she took for her father. I wheeled about from our table, and she slipped into a chair at the next one where two or three girls and an old gentleman were sitting. I could not of course determine which one of possibly a hundred men then on the Terrace was her father, and I was beginning to hope that she had been mistaken—no one came up to her, at all events—and that even if she had really seen him, her father had not seen her, when she signalled to me that I must leave the Terrace at once. This I greatly objected to, for I thought it would in no way compromise her were she to be found dining with me in so public a place; but, as usual, I did what she wished.

I did not go far, however, but after spending a few minutes in the café I returned by a circuitous way to a point whence I could command a view of the table at which we had sat. She was gone! Thoroughly alarmed, I sauntered up and down among the diners in the hope of finding her, father or no father. But she was nowhere to be seen. Her father had evidently discovered her, or she had purposely made her presence known to him after I was safely out of the way, and they had gone home together.

I feared that it might prove indiscreet for me to call at her apartment until she should have advised me to do so, and as she would be certain to do this at the first

moment that it was advisable, I went home rather sheepishly and dressed for the opera, which I attended but heard little of, for my mind was naturally on her.

I walked home, and just as I was stepping into the entrance of the pension a man came out of the shadow and told me that I must accompany him immediately to the residence of the British consul. To my dignified, not to say indignant, protest he replied very quietly that I would find it very much to my advantage to go along with him without creating a scene. I went.

CHAPTER XXVI

I WAS conducted by the officer who had arrested me to the house of the British consul, from whom I learned, to my immense astonishment, that I was known to be one Ethelbert Croft, a London medical man, and that the charge against me was, that I had decoyed an English woman of high social position to Dresden, where I had further thrown suspicion upon myself by pretending to be Edward Templeton. My arrest, the consul informed me, had been ordered as a result of an information laid against me by the lady's father, who had traced his erring daughter to Dresden and discovered that she had been seen in my company daily for two weeks. This was not, he then added, an extraditable offence, but he regretted to have to say that the lady's father had also learned that I had drawn money from the bank and entered into other financial transactions by falsely and criminally pretending that I was Templeton—and this was a serious matter, a very serious matter, indeed, as of course forgery and the obtaining of money under false pretences were crimes for which I could be extradited and sent back to England. What had I to say for myself?

Scarcely able to believe what I heard, I entered a general denial to all the charges, and stoutly asserted

my innocence. I told the consul—a quiet and reasonable gentleman—that I had never so much as heard of this Ethelbert Croft of whom he spoke; that it was manifestly a case of mistaken identity; that while it was true that I had lately seen a good deal of a certain lady, it was an outrageous affront upon her and myself to say that I had decoyed her to Dresden, where, as a matter of fact, I had met her by the merest accident in the street, and recognised her as a former acquaintance. As a British subject I demanded his protection, and the right to engage counsel and to defend myself in the proper legal way.

My evident earnestness seemed to impress him, for he had his secretary take stenographic notes of all that I said, and then drew up a statement which he asked me to sign, warning me that a false affidavit would only the more fatally prejudice my case.

“Frankly, sir,” he said after I had given him a clear and convincing history of myself before and since coming to Dresden; “frankly, sir, I have nothing against you but the word of the gentleman, the lady’s father—a man of distinguished position and the loftiest character—and still more frankly I have to confess that I believe him and doubt your statements; but, sir, as you say, you are entitled to every opportunity to establish your identity and innocence. Is there anyone here, or elsewhere for that matter, who can and will testify to your being Templeton and not Croft? Failing in this, I fear that I shall be powerless to assist you. A

warrant has been issued for your arrest on the charge of misrepresenting yourself at the bank, and papers are being forwarded from home looking to your extradition on some charge connected with your alleged illegal relations with this lady; so if you hope to clear yourself, it will be immediately necessary for you to prove your identity. I have given the authorities my personal word for your safekeeping pending this. This is fair, is it not?"

"It is indeed, sir, and I thank you, and shall at once put you in the way of ascertaining the truth of my statements, and that I am absolutely innocent," I replied with immense relief.

"Do so, then, and the sooner the better," said Mr. Troutwein, dismissing the officer who had brought me, and his own secretary as well, adding to me when they had gone out: "And now that those chaps are gone, my dear fellow, would it not perhaps be best for you to make a clean breast of it at once? I tell you candidly, these people are very highly connected at home, and things look decidedly black for you socially—I see that you are a gentleman—and legally as well. This lady left her home three weeks ago—there is marital friction, I am told—and she was traced here. She is found here constantly in your company. You are recognised as a medical man who had, against the wishes of her father, got the lady under your influence. It is further known that you pass yourself here in Dresden, at the bank and generally in the city, for some other man, and

that you claim to be a gentleman of very large fortune awaiting remittances from your London bankers. Now all this is, to put it mildly, deucedly rum, you know, and my advice is, to admit having made a mistake and having got mixed up with this woman—between ourselves, I fancy that this is not her first escapade—and then you should be able to prove that the moneys you actually drew from the bank were only sums which you yourself deposited under this name which you assumed very naturally in order to cover your identity in connection merely with the elopement, and not at all as a means of extorting money under false pretences. You surely take my point? This line of defence would involve nothing more serious than a ripple of scandal among your club friends; whereas, were the charges of forgery and fraud pressed against you in these fussy German courts, you would find the ugly stigma sticking to your name for life. So, then, who are your London bankers? Or from what other parties can I get the facts as to just who and what you are? Let me be your friend.”

“But my God, man!” I exclaimed, “I tell you that I am Edward Templeton. I never heard of this blooming medical chap, nor have I anything to hide or to deny concerning my relations with the lady. Let her people attack me if they dare! They will jolly well find that my standing is quite as high as their own, no matter who they may be!”

“Right you are!” replied Troutwein, apparently admiring my grit. “All I ask is, that you simply put

me in the way of determining this. To whom may I telegraph inquiries? Surely, you can not object, under all the beastly circumstances, to me obtaining corroboration of your words? I have your word—the word of an English gentleman, I know; but, dear chap, I have also the word of another and most unimpeachable English gentleman, and his word is to the effect; frankly, that you are an impostor and a cad! Come, now, to whom do you wish me to telegraph?”

His manner was so altogether kind and his demand so reasonable, that I choked down the impulse to tell him to go to the devil to inquire about me.

“As I have been here only a fortnight or so, I have no one in Dresden, except the bank people and the few to whom they have introduced me, to whom I can refer you; but since you all seem to connect me with medical men, I can and do most confidently refer you to two of the most eminent medical men in the world—Yznaga and de Moulin of Paris.”

I said this with so much assurance that I saw that Troutwein was considerably nonplussed by it. He took down the names and the address, and then sat looking quizzically at me for some moments.

“By Jove, old chap,” he said then, “you die like a Briton anyhow! If these two great men stand by you—well, then all I can say is, that I wish I had the claim for libel that you will have against some people that I know.”

He next telephoned to one or two local physicians

and got from them the statement that Yznaga and de Moulin were certainly among the most renowned specialists in Europe, and that de Moulin did live at the address in Neuilly which I had named.

"This beastly business begins to look deucedly interesting, don't you know, and you may depend upon me following it through to the bitter end—yes, and with a perfectly unbiassed and open mind at that," said the consul when he passed through the room in which I sat.

He went into his private office for a moment, and when he returned he handed me a telegram which he had written, saying, "There! Read that, and tell me if you think that it covers the situation."

The message ran:

"One Edward Templeton here is accused of being Ethelbert Croft, a London surgeon. Failing proper identification he may be left in a serious predicament. He refers me to you. Please advise me fully."

It was addressed to de Moulin, and at my request Troutwein wrote another telegram also to de Moulin, which I signed in order to assure him that the inquiries were being made with my knowledge and approval. Both despatches were sent immediately, and then the genial consul and I settled down for a chat on all sorts of topics nowise connected with the ugly business which had brought us together. We talked half the long night through.

CHAPTER XXVII

SHORTLY after breakfast on the following morning de Moulin's two replies arrived. To myself he telegraphed merely that he earnestly hoped that I would wait for him in Dresden, whither he was coming with all possible haste; but to Troutwein he sent a despatch which, although completely establishing the truth of my statements, filled me with the keenest curiosity and impatience for his arrival. Troutwein was fairly bowled over, for de Moulin telegraphed :

"Am well acquainted with both Templeton and Croft, and very readily understand how confusion as to their identity arose. Shall come to Dresden immediately and satisfactorily explain singular phenomenon. Meanwhile, please be good enough to extend every courtesy and any needed assistance to Templeton, for whom as a gentleman of the highest character both Yznaga and I fully vouch. De Moulin."

"But I say, you know," exclaimed Troutwein as he tossed the telegram over to me and looked at me with an expression of comical incredulity, "what's the game, anyhow? You are evidently all that you claim to be, and I recall everything I said to you last night, and beg your pardon—yes, and tell you once more that I envy the claim for libel which you have right enough against that jolly hoity-toity old party; but who in the name of Bedlam is this blooming Croft who goes about

putting you in such a beastly, nasty light? If I were you, old man, I'd hunt up the fellow and enter into an agreement with him looking to his immediate departure, don't you know, and permanent residence in New Zealand or somewhere, you know. Deucedly ugly thing, you know, having another chap going about with other men's wives, getting money, raising no end of a row, that sort of thing—and looking so much like one that everybody is willing to swear that he is one! Devilish bad, that!”

“Quite so,” I answered, “but I never heard of him until last night. Strange, is it not, that de Moulin should never have happened to mention so striking a likeness between two men whom he says that he knows intimately? However, we shall know all about it by this time to-morrow. In the meantime, don't you think that somebody owes me some sort of reparation? Whoever this irate old party may be who has been swearing away my good name at the bank and the police station, don't you really think that he should now be given a gentle hint as to the possibility of him getting into rather hot water unless he immediately corrects the actionable statements which he, no doubt in good faith, has been making?”

“Most assuredly,” replied Troutwein rising and looking at his watch, “and I was about to propose that I go at once armed with these telegrams, and put the matter in its true light at the bank. The bank people will of course lose no time in communicating

with the authorities—and I will be equally expeditious in giving the old gentleman a bit of friendly advice which may save him some thousands of pounds damages. How's that?"

"Do, by all means, and pray be quick about it," I answered eagerly.

Leaving me with no other guard than my own word that I would—purely for form's sake—remain at his house until the authorities should have duly released him from his obligation to act as surety for me, the now thoroughly bewildered Troutwein hurried off to put things right. He returned in about an hour and a half in a great state of mind, and I knew that he had not succeeded in his mission quite as easily as he had expected, for he bade me come into his office, and shut the door when I had done so.

"The bank people," he began, "and the authorities of course accepted de Moulin's word, and they agreed that nothing could be done in one way or the other until the arrival of the famous man, when your identity can be established beyond all question. But, I say, old chap, your fair one's giddy father flatly refuses to believe that you are any other than this absurd Croft, you know! My word, but the old beggar is a Tartar! You should have seen him erupt, and heard him sizzle! He swears that he knows you as well as he knows his own face, and that he had seen you with his own eyes dining with his daughter on the Terrace—dine there myself occa-

sionally—rather interesting, the Terrace, but beastly cooking, don't you think?"

"What else did the old gentleman have to say? Must be no end of an ass," I said when the consul stopped for a moment.

"Awful ass! But, by the bye, the old chap told me one thing that may be of interest to you. He says that his daughter has disappeared from Dresden—great lord, man, don't jump that way! My nerves aren't of the best, you know—and he also intimated that you had spirited the lady away, and that he would turn heaven and earth to have you and your criminal accomplices—de Moulin, he says, is one of them—brought to book!"

"Is the man mad?" I asked.

"Give it up," replied Troutwein laughing, "but you can jolly well take my word for it that the old gentleman is going to make things hum for a while. He demanded the opportunity to interview you here at once; but I of course refused. Since the bank has quashed all proceedings against you, like every other British subject you are at liberty to see whom you like and to refuse to see whom you don't like. Then the old madman threatened to enter a complaint against me at home—and I fear that I lost my temper. At any rate, I left him with the very emphatic statement that he had already rendered himself liable in heavy damages for slandering a gentleman vouched for by men of world-wide repute, and that if he carried his ridiculous out-

break of madness to the length of attacking me, I would retaliate by joining you in prosecuting him."

"Served him right, too!" I agreed, and we drifted into a general talk about the singular cases of mistaken identity of which we each had heard or read.

I knew that there must be some mystery, as yet inexplicable, connecting me with this troublesome fellow Croft, and I remember feeling a vague uneasiness caused by de Moulin's strange words; but Troutwein and I soon talked one another into a happier frame of mind, and we reached the sensible conclusion, that to do nothing until de Moulin's arrival was from every point of view the wisest if not the only possible course.

Then I left the consulate and went to my lodgings for a sorely needed change of linen—I still wore evening dress and yesterday's shirt of course—but promised to return to dine with the consul, to whom by this time I had taken no end of a liking. From my old *hausfrau* I learned with consternation that a lady had called no less than three times—once on the previous evening at a very late hour, and twice during that morning. I jumped to the conclusion that my visitor must of course have been Miss Leighton, and was preparing to go to her apartment, at whatever risk of running upon her belligerent father, when a note from her arrived by post.

She wrote in a breathless sort of way that she had left for Paris, where she would wait for me at the address which she had given me before. She declared

that her poor father's unfortunate appearance on the scene made it all the more necessary that she go to Paris, whence she could conveniently direct the preparations in London for our immediate escape to America or to any part of the world where we might end this mockery of existence and begin to live.

Immensely relieved by the knowledge that Gertrude was no longer in Dresden, I visited the bank and had the happiness to receive profuse apologies and elaborate explanations from the obsequious manager, who, it appeared, had also communicated independently with de Moulin, to their mutual and entire satisfaction. He had luckily heard nothing about there being a woman in the case, her father's negotiations with him having had to do solely with the matter of financial operations under the alleged alias; so after we had enjoyed the bottle of champagne which he insisted on having fetched in, the manager and I parted the best of friends.

I dined and passed the night at the consulate, and on the following morning I took my usual canter through the Grosser Garten, having assured myself that de Moulin would not be arriving before the afternoon at the earliest. Great was my surprise, therefore, when on returning to Troutwein's for breakfast I found him closeted with both de Moulin and Freycinet, who had accompanied him from Paris. They had, it seemed, been talking things over for an hour, and from Troutwein's expression as I entered I gathered that that solid embodiment of British common sense

had just been hearing something the like of which was not dreamed of in his philosophy, something decidedly "most extraordinary," since it was without the pale of orthodox British experience and tradition. Also the dream appeared to be somewhat of a nightmare to the worthy but unimaginative consul.

When I joined the three I soon perceived that poor Troutwein was rapidly nearing the conviction that either de Moulin or I, or may be he himself, was hopelessly mad. They had explained to him in strict confidence enough of the truth of the situation to enable him to know that the body, brain, voice, characteristics, and entire physical equipment of Ethelbert Croft, a medical man of standing in London, had been turned over to a totally different man, one Edward Templeton, whose personal peculiarities and mental features were entirely the result of their work, they having deliberately determined upon what sort of a man was desired and then selected the required thought-stuff with which to stock his head.

"The previous tenant, Croft, was given due notice to quit; and then this new tenant, Templeton, was given possession of the vacated skull-premises," de Moulin was stating in a perfectly quiet and natural way when I sat down beside them.

"All of which means," replied Troutwein, looking appealingly at each of us in turn, "that either the man who makes any such statement or else he who believes it must be quite incurably mad! However, sir, do

pray go on, go on! I enjoy new sensations of every sort. You are now giving me *the* sensation of my life. Proceed, please."

I myself (Templeton, that is) listened to de Moulin's long dissertation with almost as profound amazement as did Troutwein, for until Freycinet suffused my mind by hypnotic suggestion, with some inklings of my former personality, Croft was a total stranger to me. The muddled consul listened patiently, and he evidently found it impossible to question the sincerity or the scientific knowledge of the two quiet, serious, and famous gentlemen who sat there telling him, quite as a matter of course, things which, if they were true, practically revolutionised the whole universe of human consciousness and personal existence.

"But really, you know, gentlemen," exclaimed Troutwein at the conclusion of de Moulin's brilliant account of Yznaga's now fully established hypothesis, "will government permit the exercise of these awful, these incredibly stupendous powers? I think not."

"Why not?" asked Freycinet blandly, as he rolled a cigarette.

"Why not?" thundered Troutwein rising and jabbing his hands down deep into his pockets and, standing solid and square and British, looking down at the emotional little Gaul. "Why not, sir? For ten thousand reasons which occur to one at once!"

"Would you mind stating one or two of these same

ten thousand?" smilingly rejoined Freycinet. "I confess that not one of them all has ever occurred to me."

"Why, good heavens, gentlemen," retorted Troutwein, nettled by the suave Frenchman's perfect courtesy and air of deference for a man with ten thousand reasons for anything; "good heavens, don't you see that this means that science can fill the world with made-to-order characters, possibly of the most undesirable sort? Power tends to be abused, you know, and the abuse of this power would spell the end of the world. From gentlemen like yourselves we might count upon receiving only delightful chaps such as Templeton here; but from the hands of unprincipled practitioners, who can say what sort of monstrous personalities and social degenerates we might not get, don't you know? That's the point!"

"But of course society would protect itself," answered de Moulin quickly, heading off a possibly two-edged epigram from the ever ready and facile Freycinet. "Society would necessarily prescribe stringent rules for the guidance of all who might qualify for this glorious work of creating proper personalities to dwell in these skulls of ours, precisely as society now supervises the practice of medicine and restricts the sale and use of drugs known to impair the physical or moral health of man. You of course are aware that it has always been possible for an unprincipled practitioner materially to alter or even totally to ruin a man's

character by an improper use of certain drugs, like cocaine, for instance. Why, then, could not society similarly provide against an improper application of Yznaga's sublimely significant theories? And you, sir, must also recollect that, whereas any ignorant physician can destroy character by the use of drugs, no one but a highly educated and skilfully trained specialist will ever have the slightest chance to affect human character by the use of our principles."

De Moulin's last point seemed to weigh with Troutwein, for he replied with less heat as though his fears for society had been largely removed.

"But really, my dear sir," he said resuming his seat, "do you mean to tell me that it is now possible for you to evict a chap from his own skull, and then to let the empty poll to some other chap whom you practically create to suit yourself?"

"Precisely," answered de Moulin, with no more show of making a wild statement than if he were telling one the time of day, "and again I ask, why not? I see that you smile. You are thinking of the Ego, the so-called personality, the soul. Well, sir, I think that our good friend Croft here has sufficiently proved that the arrogant Ego who claimed to have a mortgage on his brain was a fraud, a purely mythical being, the creature of primitive man's superstitious imagination. We drove the imposter out, bag and baggage, and gave our friend Templeton a temporary lease of the noble temple."

"But just fancy what all this may come to mean to society!" exclaimed Troutwein.

"Truly," said Freycinet. "It means, among many other things, that we shall no longer have to have prisons, since we can get rid of criminals altogether by turning their brains over to honest personalities made expressly on government models; we shall have no more divorces, for we can fit an unhappy man or woman with a harmonious partner while you wait; there shall be no further need for lunatic asylums, because a maniac's brain can be put into perfect repair and then let to any sensible sort of fellow that his friends order. Oh, I promise you, Monsieur Troutwein, once we have got rid of this imaginary fellow, MYSELF, these heads of ours will be found to be the most charming villas that anyone could wish to live in—yes, and on these renovated and decorated homesteads there is to be no mortgage!"

We all laughed when the droll little Frenchman ended his racy bit of argument, and Troutwein said, "It will take me some time to digest all this, gentlemen, but in the meantime I beg you will not attempt to turn me out of my rather dilapidated but really very snug and cozy old skull, for I would prefer to go on paying the exorbitant interest on my mortgage, you know, than to be arrested, like Templeton here, for roaming about foreign cities disguised as one of your blooming hand-made chaps with no friends who know who the deuce he really is. And I say, Templeton, old chap, if these

giddy house-agents turn you out when Croft shows up after his holidays in Spookland, why then, you know, I shall always be glad to put you up for the night—until they select another skull for you to live in.”

We stopped with the hospitable consul that night, and when we finally left him he promised to look in on us when he next passed through Paris on his way home, for he very much wanted, he declared, to inspect the plant of what he called “The Yznaga Patent Personalities Company, Unlimited.”

I have often wondered what this eminently level-headed and broad-minded Englishman really thought of what had been told him by my friends. Certainly he acted upon the theory that the man whom he had met and come to know quite intimately as Edward Templeton was certainly a fully endowed and rational “person,” and yet he was compelled later to accept the fact that the body which had contained this man Templeton was returned to quite another “person” named Croft. It would be interesting to learn just how his typically British mind has accounted for all this.

De Moulin’s inquiries resulted in the welcome news that Miss Leighton’s father had left Dresden, and as there was nothing else to keep us there, we also took our departure and made our way to Paris, where Yznaga awaited us in transports of relief and pleasure. It must be clearly understood that I was Templeton all

this time, and that it was only when Freycinet hypnotised me into the belief that my now classic "Broca's centre" needed repairing that I consented to go with him to Neuilly. Then, I said to myself, I would rejoin Gertrude.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE watch which they kept upon me after our arrival at Neuilly was so strict that I found it impossible to elude them, and so did not contrive to visit Miss Leighton. On the two occasions when I urged some pressing duty as an excuse for leaving the house Freycinet at once placed me under his control, and each time, on my regaining independent consciousness, I had quite forgotten what it was that I wanted to do. In this way the two or three days preceding the critical attempt to restore "Croft" to "myself" were passed.

Finally everything was in readiness, and on the re-assembling of all those who had witnessed my expulsion in favour of "Templeton," immediate preparations were made for my recall. It is enough here to state that the experiment proved a triumphant success. What was done to effect my restoration to my former personality was practically the reverse of what had been done in order to banish that personality. The result was pronounced. In three days Yznaga had succeeded in actually extinguishing the seemingly existent "person" known as Edward Templeton, and in evoking from the misty void of his recent exile the formerly existent (seemingly) "person" now known once more as Ethelbert Croft.

It is vital to the understanding of the incredible chapters still remaining of this already sufficiently incredible story that I now speak of certain phenomena which followed close upon my restoration to my Croft-self. As the experiments and operations drew toward the end I was conscious of a sort of dim image or reminiscence of my experiences while Templeton tenanted my brain. I told Yznaga of this, and the unexpected fact interested him so much and opened to his genius such an immensity of possibility that he at once decided to make an exhaustive investigation. I was accordingly subjected alternately to Croft-image producing operations and those producing Templeton-images. This back-and-forth treatment was persisted in for some days, and exquisitely delicate observations were made of the precise instant when one set of impressions was substituted for the other, as well as of the exact nature of the exciting causes resulting in the substitution. Yznaga became like one inspired as these observations proceeded, for he very soon detected the startling fact that I myself could by an effort of my will (after many thousands of attempts) "connect myself," as it were, now with Croft and again with Templeton! This of course suggested a simply bewildering possibility. A far less audacious and active imagination than that of the great genius Yznaga will readily perceive what might come of this profoundly significant discovery. I now found myself possessed of two sets of mental pictures, two categories of psychic intuitions,

two independent and adequately equipped "personalities," and my brain centres were apparently ready to "function" either of these as I wished—very much as any particular series of electric lights can be "lit," and at the same time any other series be "put out," by simply turning the current on to one or other of the circuits! I recalled what Yznaga had said to me in one of our first talks, about the brain being like an incandescent electric light bulb, and I now discovered with unspeakable interest that I could at will "turn on the current" which instantly "lit up" Templeton, and "turn off the current" in order to "put out" Croft!

These discoveries plunged Yznaga into a boundless sea of speculation and experiment, when death overtook him in the very midst of his first efforts. It remains for others, therefore, to carry on the investigations which may eventually reveal the glorious truth that "thought" and "life" are not proprietary articles distributed in tiny parcels to individuals, but a universal fund inhering in the One life of the ALL, and that the temporarily individualised mind may "connect" with this reservoir of universal thought—and the brain of each be able to welcome the thoughts of all! This achievement, perhaps, will not seem a greater miracle to our children than did the catching of the human voice in the wax cylinder of the phonograph, whence it could be commanded to "speak" to us after the lips that had formed the words had crumbled into dust.

My principal reason for mentioning the unforeseen

development in my case is, that it was owing to my accidentally discovered ability to summon "Templeton" to revisit my brain that I have been able to record the details of my experiences when he was the sole inmate of the premises; and also because it explains my subsequent doings, as will now be more particularly seen.

It will be remembered that upon the receipt of Lord Torbeth's letter abruptly announcing his unwillingness to have anything more to do with any of us, Yznaga hastened to London in the hope of persuading the viscount to reconsider his sudden decision which, it was confidently believed, must have been made under some unfortunate misunderstanding. The old man's mission, alas! proved a failure, for Lord Torbeth politely but very positively refused to reveal his reasons or to discuss the question at all. With the more than anticipated success of the operations on my brain, however, Yznaga felt that it would be worse than a pity to allow the gifted Lady Torbeth to spend the balance of her life in momentary dread of an invasion by one or other of the malicious personalities who had so often succeeded in ousting her proper self, when it had been definitely demonstrated that they could be annihilated. It was accordingly decided that I should go to London and exert my best efforts toward bringing the viscount to a true view of his opportunity and his duty.

I was overjoyed to undertake this blessed task, for since my restoration as Croft my mind was constantly

recurring to the sad, sweet, wistful face of the viscountess as I had seen it during that pathetic interview on the night before I was subjected to the unprecedented ordeal on her behalf. I made immediate arrangements to run over to England, stopping only long enough to make a second attempt to see Miss Leighton. But, as on the previous occasion, when I called at her apartment her maid told me that Miss Leighton was out of town and would not return until the following night. She had left a cordial little note for me, however, and after writing an answer to it, which I left with the maid, I took the noon train for Calais and reached London in time to dine at my club.

Thinking it best that I pave the way to an interview by first writing Lord Torbeth, I sent him a line of cheery salutation and announced that I was back in town fully restored to my own self, and begged him to name an early hour when I might see him. Imagine my consternation and sorrow—they had told me nothing about the viscount's change of feeling toward me—when I received the following letter:

*"Sir:—*I notice your communication only because my solicitor advises me that you are doubtless open to an offer of money at all times. I beg to say, therefore, that I am prepared to pay you any reasonable sum in return for immediately placing me in possession of Lady Torbeth's present address. When she disappeared from London recently I naturally supposed that she, acting under one of her abnormal mental hallucinations, had gone to Neuilly, there to seek the treatment from Freycinet previously found so beneficial. I at once went to Paris and learned that the viscountess had not been seen at the sana-

torium since the day that I myself took her there. I also learned that you, sir, had mysteriously disappeared. As you are aware, there had not been wanting those who warned me against placing my unfortunate wife unreservedly under the influence of a practitioner scarcely known in London and of whom the little that was known led to the conclusion that he entertained theories subversive of all idea of moral responsibility, and who in consequence was a man in no way feeling himself bound by those principles that govern honourable men. I had met you, however, and I confess I had believed you to be an English gentleman as well as a scientist of unusual ability. Well, sir, on finding that you had slipped away surreptitiously at night from de Moulin's house—at precisely the time that Lady Torbeth disappeared—I reluctantly advised the family of the viscountess, and it was the immediate and very positive conviction of the dean that you had prostituted your alleged scientific ability to the unspeakably base end of bringing an unfortunate woman under your influence. There is no name known to me sufficiently vile for a man who will betray the wife of his friend; and what, sir, shall I say of one who, knowing a woman to be of unsound mind, and who has been entrusted professionally with her care, deliberately plans and fiendishly carries out his purpose as you have done? Most reluctantly, most sorrowfully, I consented to allow the dean to search for the wretched lady, his child. He traced her to Dresden; she was there seen constantly at all hours of the day and night in your company; you were further known to have introduced yourself at a bank and in the city as another than your true self; and lastly, after you were apprehended you succeeded in persuading certain eminent men of science as well as the British consul to believe the trick you had played by pretending to have been metamorphosed into one Templeton, your criminal alias.


“Lady Torbeth then fled from Dresden, and neither the dean nor I have subsequently been able to get any clue of her whereabouts. I repeat, therefore, that if your object in now approaching me in this amazingly barefaced way is for the purpose of extorting money from me, I am prepared to pay you for infor-

mation that will lead me to reach Lady Torbeth. Consideration for this most unhappy lady and her afflicted parents alone prevents me taking steps against you in a criminal prosecution. I am requested by Miss Eunice Croft, your aunt, to advise you that she has now retired to her own home in Somersetshire, she having finally abandoned all hope of seeing you cleared of the shameful charges hanging over you. A prompt compliance with my request will end the matter, as far as I am concerned.

TORBETH."

I dropped the letter. A horror of great darkness filled my mind, and it was some time before I could accept the evidence of my senses and get myself to believe that this frightful letter could have been intended for me. It was incredible, infamous, that anyone should have so foully slandered me! I had never so much as laid eyes on Lady Torbeth, but once in my life—the time that I met her and the viscount at his own earnest entreaty, at their apartment in Paris. The picture of her which I had ever since carried in my memory was of the exquisitely lovely wife with her husband's arm about her shoulders as she stood saying farewell to me and begging me to help her to crush out forever the malign personalities which strove to make her less the loyal wife and noble woman than she yearned with all her soul to be. It was, therefore, an unspeakably outrageous and gratuitous act of treachery or hate to accuse me of having had improper intentions toward Lady Torbeth. An enemy had done me this dastardly wrong. Who could he be?

I knew that the dean had resolved to undo me, and



I also knew him to be a narrow, bitter and bigoted priest, capable of any piece of waspish meanness toward a doctrinal opponent; but it was unthinkable that a dignitary of the church and a gentleman of undoubted character could have descended to the level of a common blackguard. No! The dean could not have deliberately vilified his own daughter or myself; but it would be perfectly consistent with his smallness of mind to accept without sufficient evidence the malicious tales of others capable of intentional defamation. Someone who had known of my relations with Miss Leighton in Dresden must have used that knowledge whereon to fabricate his scandalous story. The viscountess having by a most unhappy coincidence disappeared simultaneously with myself, the nefarious task of my traducer was made so much easier. He had but to report to the only too suspicious and ungenerous dean, that I had been seen in Dresden with a lady answering to the description of the viscountess—and the rest was easy. In such soil as the dean's mind contained the seeds of credulity respecting the wickedness of any heretic grow quickly; it is characteristic of theologians to believe that one who differs from themselves in opinions must necessarily also differ from them in moral worth!

One only course, therefore, I felt was open to me. I must prove to Lord Torbeth that the woman with whom I had been associated so intimately in Dresden was Miss Leighton and not Lady Torbeth. This done, it would matter little to me what Dean Chelmsford

might or might not see fit to think or to say about me. As soon as the first sting of outraged feelings had subsided somewhat I wrote Lord Torbeth as follows:

*"My Lord:—*Were I not in a position to prove absolutely and at once that the lady in whose company I had the honour to be seen frequently in Dresden is not Lady Torbeth, and were I not convinced that your base charges are founded upon the easily demolished reports of some unaccountably malicious person, I truly do not know how I could endure the sorrow and pain which your lordship's letter has caused me. I came to London at Yznaga's request for the purpose of advising you that all of his claims have been triumphantly established in my case, thereby opening a the way for the permanent installation of the true character of the viscountess within her brain. Pray, pray, my dear Lord Torbeth, do not allow yourself to be deceived as to my honour and at the same time cheated out of the measureless happiness in store for you upon the successful carrying out of Yznaga's intentions respecting Lady Torbeth.

"You are an Englishman. So am I. I therefore demand fair play. I appeal to your lordship's manliness. Is it fair to condemn on nothing more than the accusation of some unknown enemy striking in the dark, a man previously esteemed a gentleman and man of honour and a friend? Assuredly not! You certainly can not wish to believe in your wife's irreparable disgrace nor in my dishonour unless compelled to do so after fully investigating all of the evidence. I demand, therefore, the right to be given an immediate opportunity to prove that the lady with whom I associated in Dresden is not Lady Torbeth, and in order to do this I beg you to allow me to present you to her. She is in Paris, and any number of credible witnesses can be found to identify her as the person seen with me in Dresden.

*"Awaiting with the utmost concern your lordship's reply,
I am,*

Yours very sincerely,

"ETHELBERT CROFT."

Having sent off this letter by special messenger, I wrote a long explanation and appeal to poor, perplexed Aunt Eunice, and then started out to hunt up some of my old friends, in order to ascertain to what extent scandal had already injured me in their eyes. I was at once enlightened as to the celerity with which defamation can accomplish its foul work. Some of my former friends gave me very plainly to understand that a man labouring under the charges known to lie against me must not presume on old ties, while others of a more generous temper quite as plainly gave me to understand that they believed me to be insane!

I returned to my club feeling utterly unhappy, and a short note from Lord Torbeth, which I found had arrived—not in response to my letter, however—finished me.

“Since writing you yesterday evening,” he now wrote, “I have decided that it is best to tell you something which at first I thought it just as well not to mention. Some time ago the viscountess—during the most acute attack of mental derangement which she had ever had—was led by her insanity to the revolting depth of actually visiting an infamous club called the *Cercle Potocka*. She confessed this to me as soon as the usual morbid reaction had plunged her into remorse and religious excitement. She could not, however, remember the name of the villain who accompanied her to the vile place. After I was made aware of your true character I made it my business to get all the information that I could about your movements at about the time of your first being engaged to treat the viscountess, and I was told that on the very night of her visit to the club you were seen emerging from it with a closely veiled woman. I leave you, sir, to make what inference you like

from this damnable set of circumstances, assuring you that I have made my own inferences and that they force me to believe you a blackguard.

TORBETH."

This was too much! Wild with a sense of having been made the victim of some fiend's malignity, I sprang into a cab and told the cabby to drive me at a mad pace to the Duke of Ackerby's house.

CHAPTER XXIX

LORD ACKERBY was at home and delighted to see me. He had not heard of my return to England, or to my right senses, as he put it, and for half an hour he regaled me with a witty account of his adventures when seeking for "Templeton" up and down the Continent.

"If they had only made the chap one after my own kidney," he laughed, "why, then I might have had some chance of running him to earth at Monte Carlo, don't you know, or at any one of a hundred places scattered from the Riviera to Buda-Pesth, at which birds of my feather flock together. But they didn't. No. They made you one of those deucedly cultured chaps who go in for art and music and that sort of thing—and I couldn't play the game. But I'm no end glad to see you, old man. Now what's the good word?"

"Alas!" I replied, "I fear that the word is devilish bad just now. Fact is, I sought your Grace in order to ask you to help me out of a hole—yes, don't laugh!—as nasty a hole as a man could very well get into."

"By Jove," said the duke, becoming serious, "you look regularly done, you do, on my word! What in heaven's name is it now? I think that we need not

hesitate to let each other into the secrets of whatever game is on. Open up, then, old chap."

"I am glad that you put it in just that light," I answered, "for I shall have to appear to be very personal in what I have to say. Do you remember having told me once that you came perilously near to taking an irrevocable step with Lady Torbeth?"

The duke started and sat up straight. His naturally chummy disposition made him the most approachable of men, and unlimited brandy-and-soda had tended to wash out much of the restraint expected in one of exalted station in his dealings with common men; but for all that, he was peer of the realm and the son of a long line of ducal ancestors, and as he now sat staring at me I felt this.

"Upon my soul!" he exclaimed presently, "you are a bit direct, aren't you? But, great Lord," he added after a hearty laugh, "it's rather late for me to feel touchy at anything you may say to me. And anyhow, I recollect that it was I who sought you to tell you about that damned break—the worst, I assure you, of my whole life."

"As your medical adviser, my Lord, I may be trusted with your confidence," I said quietly, "and surely you know me well enough to know that I now allude to this matter with no idea of preaching to your Grace. In my own present ugly predicament I need your help—that is why I venture to refer to what you once told me when you yourself were in a fix!"

"P-h-e-w! Blows the wind there?" he asked with a wicked twinkle in his little restless grey eyes. "By Jove, I might better have looked for you at some of those places, after all, mightn't I?"

"I am serious, your Grace—terribly in earnest," I replied, "and I shall be under the deepest obligation to you if you will tell me the particulars of your narrow escape in that little affair of yours and the poor viscountess. I have the gravest reasons for making this amazing request, as you will see presently. To what place was it that you intended to take her that night? Pray, be frank. I shall make no unfair inferences nor any use of what you tell me."

"Really, you know! But then, since you know the beastly facts, there is really no reason why you should not know the details which, after all, do not signify. Only see here, old chap, you must make allowances, you know. I was saturated with brandy at the time, and the duchess—God bless her!—was giving me the very devil for having gone to town to meet the viscountess. You remember, do you not, that it was on the very day that you and Torbeth were at the castle? Well, the duchess, I say, was acting like a fury and accusing me of wrong that I had not dreamed of. Damn it! when will women ever learn that a man will go off and do the very thing of which they in their beastly jealousy accuse him? If a chap is being damned for what he hasn't done, why then, he'll do it—to get even, you know; and anyhow, he might as

well be hung for the sheep of real pleasure as for the lamb of a trumped-up charge, damn it! Well, then, I came up to town on the Monday and poured alcohol into my veins which were already burning sufficiently. And then the viscountess sent for me. My God! how glorious she was! You know, Croft, one of the most awful things in this beastly world of ours is that a good woman tempts a man a million times more than a bad woman ever can tempt him. The devil seems to make innocence infinitely more attractive to lust than evil is. Well, Lady Torbeth was mad. She was wild with passion and hunger and despair. She flung herself at me—and I was what alcohol alone can make of a fool. She implored me to take her to some of the clubs of which she had read in the trashy novels, and I agreed—God forgive me!—to meet her at the *Cercle Potocka*—you know, where I saw you, by the way, that same night. I kept the appointment, but thank God, she did not. That's the story. Now, old man, translate, please."

"You say that you saw me at that place, your Grace?" I asked after my first surprise had passed.

"Why, yes. As I came down the steps after learning to my immense relief that the viscountess had not been there, I caught sight of you standing in the court with a woman whose face was covered with a thick veil. Now, for goodness sake, don't look so like a shy old maid! You're a man, and men are apt to run into each other almost anywhere, you know. You of course

know that gentlemen never mention such accidental encounters, however."

"Are you quite certain that you have never mentioned having seen me there?" I asked with studied complacency, so as not to make him feel that I resented his breach of tact.

"What the devil do you mean? I am a gentleman, I hope," he retorted warmly.

"And a true friend of mine," I hastened to add, "but somebody who saw me there has spoken of it, and in view of the fact that you were good enough to take part in the search for me when I was Templeton, I thought it more than likely that you all discussed my private character freely among yourselves, you know, in order the better to locate me in some place of the sort to which it was known that I might go on the quiet. It would have been both natural and proper for you, an intimate personal friend, to mention this matter to others of my intimate friends—that's all."

"By Jove!" cried the duke when I stopped. "Now that you speak of it I am half inclined to believe—yes, I am sure that I did mention having seen you at the St. John's Wood naughty place to Torbeth—do forgive me, will you not, since I did it with a view to help him find you."

"It is not a question of forgiving you, my Lord: I thank you. Only, it is but fair that I tell you that your kindness has resulted in placing me in an ugly light—quite by accident, you know, and as the result of other

unfortunate circumstances which happen to fit into this in a way to leave me in no end of a bad position."

"By gad, is that so? I need scarcely tell you, dear boy, that I am sorry, and that I have the right to be told just how I can do whatever is in my power to put you right again. Come now, out with it! What's the game?"

"Frankly, then, Lord Torbeth has accused me of having gone to the infernal club with the viscountess during one of her hysterical fits. Rather nasty, that, eh?"

"The deuce you say!" exclaimed the duke jumping up and hurrying over to a desk in the corner of the room, at which he sat and wrote furiously for some minutes.

"There!" he said when he finished writing and came back to where I sat poking my stick into the fire on the hearth; "read that."

This is what I read:

"Dear Torbeth:—Croft has just told me of the beastly ugly misunderstanding that has arisen between two of the decentest chaps alive, and I hasten to put an end to the damned nonsense, by telling you that on my honour as a gentleman the woman who was with him at the club in St. John's Wood on the night I saw him there was not anyone in whom you are or could be in any way interested. Come like a good fellow and dine with Croft and me at my club this evening.

"Yours for fair play and the rules of the game,

"ACKERBY."

"I guess that will puncture the idiotic bubble in

Torbeth's stupid head—no end of an ass, Torbeth," said the duke with a hearty laugh of relief and aversion to melodrama of every sort.

"Downright decent of you," I replied, "but this will not lead to any embarrassing developments involving yourself, I hope?"

"Never fear, my boy. I will see to that, and anyhow, I don't propose to have you suffer in my stead, you know. My sins don't run in just that line, thank God."

Armed with this convincing bit of evidence, which it was arranged that I myself would deliver into the viscount's own hands, I drove to Lord Torbeth's and gave him the duke's note without comment, and left immediately without waiting to learn its effect.

Alas! Malignity is not so easily torn from its grasp upon its victims. When I reached my club intending to get an hour's sleep—the preceding night had been a restless torture—I found a letter from Mrs. Deniston of all people. Its perusal left me in a state of final despair. She wrote as follows:

*"My dear Mr. Croft:—*I have just heard with immense relief that you are once more in town, and without a moment's delay I write to unburden my soul of a load which has well-nigh crushed me. Let me tell you in as few words as possible. You will recall the young woman to whom I presented you on the day that I called at your house, and with whom you had such a painful experience on that night. What will you say when I tell you that shortly after you left for the Continent I discovered that she had been deceiving me in the most scandalous and unnecessary way? You see, I met her at Cannes where she was

staying quite by herself, and I took a great fancy to her and pitied her after she told me of the way in which her people failed to appreciate her. When later I detected her peculiar mental disturbances my interest and sympathy were deepened, and I encouraged her to come to my house whenever she liked, without waiting to be invited, and to stop as long as she wanted to. She would come and go at all hours, and I came to feel that, but for me, she would have had no one to advise her or to sympathize with her. Well, my dear friend, she was deceiving me all the time. Her name was not Errington. She was not an unmarried and misunderstood girl driven from home by unfeeling parents and unsympathetic relations; but a married woman, the wife of Viscount Torbeth. And now——”

I read no more. This settled it. I was hopelessly in the toils of incriminating circumstances from out of which it was clearly useless to struggle. Lord Ackerby had just sworn to the viscount that it was not Lady Torbeth who had been with me to the accursed club, and here this letter from Mrs. Deniston gave the lie to his statement—and damnable colour to the viscount's worst suspicions. What was I to do? My innocence was absolute; but so also was the likelihood of my being unable to establish it. Without waiting to weigh the consequences I dashed off a line to the duke telling him that I could not now meet Lord Torbeth at dinner, and then made hasty preparations to return to Paris. My wild intention was to meet Miss Leighton and to go with her to America on the first steamer. I telegraphed to her that I would see her on the following day, and asked her to be ready to carry out the plan which she had outlined in her last letter to me.

CHAPTER XXX

BEFORE I could give effect to my rash impulse, however, I received Lord Torbeth's reply to my letter, and it altered the aspect of the situation and caused me to make another attempt to rehabilitate my character in his eyes. He wrote simply to say that he would meet me at his house that evening, but that, as he had the dean's own word for it, he must continue to believe that I had been with the viscountess in Dresden. It could hardly be, he said, that a father could be deceived as to the identity of his child; but he would hear what I had to say, solely in the hope that he might be able to purchase from me some clue to his wife's present whereabouts. He acknowledged having received a note from Lord Ackerby, but made no comment upon its contents.

Late in the afternoon I succeeded with some difficulty in finding Tredwell, and got from him a sworn statement as to what had occurred on the fateful night of our visit to the *Cercle Potocka*; and then I called on Mrs. Deniston, from whom I obtained a letter clearly stating that she had herself introduced me to a "Miss Errington," who had subsequently proved to be Lady Torbeth, and that at the time of "Miss Errington's" hysterical escapade, in which I had acted as her medical

adviser and protector, she was not in her right mind. Surely, I said to myself, these proofs, together with the fact that I proposed to introduce him to Miss Leighton, must convince Lord Torbeth of my innocence—unless he was a wholly different man from what I had always thought him.

It was a painful meeting, that between the viscount and me, as may well be imagined. I was closeted with him for five hours, and when we parted I felt certain that my unflinching stand had had some effect upon him. I hid nothing from him, but after admitting that I had that very day learned that it was Lady Torbeth who had asked me to meet her at the club, I showed him Tredwell's statement and also Mrs. Deniston's letter.

"Errington?" he cried with a start when he came to the name in Mrs. Deniston's letter. "I confess, Mr. Croft, that that is the name which the wretched viscountess used to adopt when her passionate demon invaded her mind—she had found a woman of that name in some novel and it seemed to fascinate her when in her amorous moods. I also admit that this certainly gives colour to your extraordinary story. But now go on, please."

I then argued that the dean might have become mentally unbalanced and fancied that he saw his daughter, for whom he was searching with so much anguish, taking care to remind Lord Torbeth that he himself had said to me that he had usually found the facts to

be otherwise than as the good dean believed them to be; and I clinched this argument by showing him a telegram from Miss Leighton in which she expressed her willingness to receive him at her home in Paris.

When I ended my long and impassioned plea, I had so far shaken the viscount's original determination not to accept anything that I might say that he promised to go to Paris immediately with me. There, I pointed out, he could get from Yznaga and de Moulin the truth as to the reality of my transformation into Templeton, clearing me from the charge of having pretended to the changed personality merely to attain my base ends, and there also he could meet Miss Leighton—the best possible proof that the dean had been mistaken in supposing her to be Lady Torbeth.

Arranging to meet in Paris on the next day but one, we parted in a decidedly happier mood than that in which we had met, and I hastened back to Neuilly to report the last unfortunate turn in affairs to Yznaga and the others. Their distress and amazement were unbounded, but as there was nothing to be done until the viscount's arrival, I bade them all good-night and went to bed very soon after dinner.

What with the excitement of the last two days and the strain under which I had been living for some weeks, I passed another sleepless night, and as morning approached I felt a sort of undefined dread lest in my recent excursions beyond the pale of the known into the misty reaches of the unknown some delicate adjust-

ment of my mental mechanism might have got injured or temporarily out of gear. Here were men of unquestioned veracity, like the dean, declaring that I had done things which I was morally certain (I thought) that I had not done. Furthermore, ever since my restoration to the character of Croft a number of impressions acquired as Templeton were found to persist among my proper mental images—my knowledge of Miss Leighton was one of these—but the great mass of Templeton's impressions were forever and totally lost to Croft. Might it not then, after all, be possible that I had met Lady Torbeth when I was Edward Templeton, and that all memory of this had been washed away, even when I now from time to time returned to the Templeton consciousness?

I remembered now that Lady Torbeth had implored me to recognise her and befriend her if we should chance to meet "in the shadows." The viscount had just told me that she had relapsed into the profoundest state of alienated personality that he had ever known at the very time that I had fled to Dresden. With horror I now asked myself, if while in that state Lady Torbeth might not have found her way to Dresden? If she had done so, had we there been drawn together by forces inoperative or unknown in "real life," but operative and all-compelling in the dim regions "beyond"? I could not see how this could have been the case, because I knew that I had been so constantly with Miss Leigh-
x n that I would have had no time for those repeated

meetings with Lady Torbeth of which the dean and others swore that they had indisputable evidence.

I rose from my bed more fatigued than I had been when I lay down, and as soon as de Moulin came out from his early clinic I sought him in private and told him frankly the doubts and conjectures which had troubled me during the night. He showed that he also thought the matter serious, for he at once called Yznaga and Freycinet into consultation.


The upshot of our two hours' conference was, that I was "induced" hypnotically by Freycinet to recall Lady Torbeth's face—it had quite faded out of my memory in the rubbing in and rubbing out that had been going on for over a month—and when her features, name, characteristics and everything pertaining to her were fixed in my mind, a powerful ray-vibration was brought to bear upon my centres of co-ordination, analysis, and correlation. The result was, of course, that for the time being Lady Torbeth "became" to me in a most vivid and insistent degree. But for all that, I could not remember that I had ever seen her, except that one time at her husband's apartment. This naturally set at rest the fears of the past night, and I awaited my meeting with the viscount with an easy mind.

But my difficulties were not yet at an end, by any means. I had still to call on Gertrude and explain to her the delicate reasons why I had asked her to allow me to bring an English nobleman, of whom she had

never heard, to see her. I had to give her some intimation of the viscount's object in coming. But how was I to do this without betraying the revolting truth? The slightest indiscretion on my part would certainly reveal the ghastly facts to this supersensitive and exquisite woman—and I could fancy the result! I knew, however, that I could rely implicitly upon Lord Torbeth's fine sense of decency, and that from the instant that he saw her and realised the horrid mistake that had been made, his unfailing tact and courtesy would protect Miss Leighton from all danger of her ever learning the true character of his visit. Yes, I said to myself over and over again, once that my innocence was established, Lord Torbeth would again become my truest friend and most prudent counsellor in the delicate matter of reconciling Gertrude to her people and bringing about our union under happier circumstances than those which we had feared must attend it.

Swinging back and forth from hope to fear, from the keenest sense of peril to an almost childish confidence that all would yet be right, I spent the interminable afternoon wandering about the boulevards which now seemed insufferably dull to me, and then at last I made my way to Gertrude's apartment at the time that Tomkins, her maid, had told me that she would have returned from St. Cloud.

I sat running my fingers over the piano keys, idly following now one and then another of the *motifs*



which we used to like the best at the opera. She was long in dressing, for, quite unlike herself, she kept me waiting fully three-quarters of an hour. Then I heard her quick step in the passage, and the next moment the door was opened and I jumped to my feet with the pent-up eagerness of long, dreary days of separation.

In a book in which so much has tried the reader's credulity it can not matter if here, at its end, one more incredible thing is set down.

The woman who now came running in with outstretched welcoming hands was not Gertrude Leighton. She wore clasped about her bare, round arm a curious gold band of Oriental workmanship studded with superb emeralds. Her gown was that worn by Muriel Errington at the Three Feathers Theatre on the night that Sir Arkell Mostyn died. It was Lady Torbeth!

A moment of excruciating agony passed as I realised the unspeakable horror of my situation, and the utter impossibility of ever being able to exonerate myself before Lord Torbeth. I had sworn on my honour as a man that the woman to whom I would introduce him, and with whom base slander had associated my name, was not his wife, and now I found that—as he would be certain to regard it—she was his wife! To what avail would it be to persuade an outraged husband, that just as "I" had been "another" at the time of my alleged meetings with her, "she" also had been not "Lady Torbeth," nor yet "Miss Errington," but quite another person, "Miss Leighton?"

I was revolving one mad plan of action after another through my whirling brain when with her first word Lady Torbeth gave me a glimpse of at least one desperate way out.

"Doctor Croft," she exclaimed, "*this is good of you!* Here I have been only a few hours, and you come like a good kind man, to welcome me. I need not tell you how well I am, but you will be delighted, I am sure, to hear that I have come to take the treatment which your heroic self-sacrifice has demonstrated will be perfectly successful. And now, dear knight of the brave heart, tell me: you suffered nothing, did you, while undergoing for my sake the ordeal which seemed so awful since no one had ever before passed through it? I should never forgive myself if you had suffered for me."

I looked at her. It was evident that all recollection of Gertrude Leighton had been blotted out from her mind. She was again the devoted, earnest, singularly winsome woman whom I had met that night with her husband the viscount, and with infinite joy I realised that I could now restore her to him. But the next instant I felt the full force of the truth, that with her recrudescence as Lady Torbeth she had shattered my only means of proving my innocence! It was this woman with whom I had been sounding the depths of passionate love. I myself knew, of course, that it was not really "she," but I fancied that I could hear the jeering laugh of an incredulous and malicious

world and the terrible wrath of the patient man, her husband.

"Yes," I replied, trying to keep her from detecting my excitement, "I came expressly to tell you that the experiments were in every way a perfect success, and that I passed through the really delightful experience unhurt, and am myself again, as you see. It gives me great pleasure also to tell your ladyship that Lord Torbeth will visit Yznaga to-morrow."

"To-morrow?" she asked with a queer look in her eye; "that is strange, for I expected him this evening. When did you see him?"

"In London yesterday afternoon. He then intended to come to Paris to-morrow, but of course your advices are no doubt later."


She said that she had heard only indirectly that he was to arrive that evening; and then we talked about a number of things connected with my recent experiences. I led the conversation, as soon as I could do so without abruptness, to Dresden, and she said that she had never been there, but very much wished to go, if for nothing else, to see Rafael's *Madonna*. No, she had never met Miss Gertrude Leighton, she said, and I could see that my question in no way suggested anything to her mind. When I rose to go I knew that this woman was not the woman for whom I had cherished the one ardent passion of my life. Yet how was I to prove this to others?

I laid the entire situation before Yznaga and de

Moulin, and they, while they sympathized with me in my predicament, refused to look upon the matter as being the inextricable and hopeless catastrophe that I felt it to be. It was decided that on meeting Lord Torbeth as arranged, in the morning, I was to bring him direct to de Moulin's house, and must at all costs prevent him seeing Lady Torbeth-Gertrude Leighton until after Yznaga had done what was yet possible to avert the impending crisis. Yznaga would then solemnly assure the viscount that my whole Dresden experience was that of the person Templeton, whom they had introduced into my brain—Consul Troutwein would bear them out in this—and that, if it were found, as it now seemed likely, that the brain and body of Lady Torbeth had also been in Dresden with me, it was not “herself” within that brain and body—a phenomenon which Lord Torbeth himself had told them was of frequent occurrence in his wife's extraordinary case.

These counsels and plans served to give me considerable comfort, but the ugly, the impossible task still confronted me, of getting a proud and embittered man to believe that, while my brain and his wife's brain had been for weeks in hourly contact and in the interchange of affections and emotions and passionate assurances of mutual love, yet it was not “I” nor “she” who had thus been all in all to each other!

The fateful hour arrived at last, and I went to meet the man who, barring a miraculous accession of faith



on his part in the most audacious claim ever put forward by speculative science, must continue to believe that I, through the most infamous cunning and betrayal of professional trust, had assailed his honour at its dearest point.

"I have the most welcome news for your Lordship," I began as we got into the cab which was to take us out to Neuilly.

"It is woefully overdue, if it be good news—for me. What is it?" asked the viscount sadly, but with less coldness than he had shown on our meeting.

"I saw Lady Torbeth last evening. She is in excellent health. She is here in Paris, and I told her that you were coming to-day to see her."

I watched his face as I spoke. At first there was a look of tigerish suspicion, of frantic jealousy, but presently his own look of calm, sad readiness to bear anything displaced it. When I had finished what I was saying he turned to me with a slight trembling about his lips, and said very low and quietly, "Thank you. I shall be glad to see the viscountess."

Neither of us had the heart to break the silence again during the long drive. Each was busy with what were probably the saddest and darkest thoughts of his life. Through all of my own agony on knowing that I had lost forever in the mists of oblivion the ineffably precious being Gertrude Leighton, I felt the added horror of having through utterly uncontrollable circumstances done this man of all men on earth this one horrible


ineffaceable, eternal wrong—a wrong which, though I knew it did not deserve in any way the name or the penalties which all must attach to it, yet had in it for him and me and the woman all of its blighting and nameless sting.

The interview between Lord Torbeth and Yznaga lasted two hours—I was mercifully excused from being present—and when the viscount came out into the office in which I was sitting I saw that his nobility of nature had triumphed over all feelings of jealousy and suspicion, his sane reason over his emotions.

“They have told me—everything,” he said putting out his strong hand to take my own, “and I believe them. I believe that you are not responsible for whatever you may have done while in Dresden. Come, dear fellow, if you can forgive me, take me to my wife!”

Only once in my life have I realised in all of its fullness the grandeur of man’s nature at its best—when this man spoke to me as he did. I do not know one other man who, under all of the circumstances, would have said to Reason and Science and Faith: “Come ye and rule over me! Control my senses, subjugate my emotions, overwhelm my passions, take my will into your keeping and ignore my lifelong habits of mind, and let Truth only be my portion, and Fact my god!”

Percival Aston, Viscount Torbeth, said this in effect that moment. May his tribe increase!



CHAPTER XXXI

ON arriving with Lord Torbeth at his wife's apartment I saw in the face of the maid Tomkins that something unusual had occurred, and after she beckoned mysteriously to me to linger in the passage when the viscount had gone into the drawing-room, I knew that trouble was afoot. I stopped with reluctance to see what she wanted, for it was most embarrassing to appear to be on confidential terms with Lady Torbeth's servants, and then the incident must give the viscount the impression that she had ordered the maid to communicate with me privately before the rightful master of the house was even welcomed.

Tomkins burst into tears when she had closed the drawing-room door in spite of my vehement signals to desist. Then she told me that after my visit yesterday Miss Leighton must have gone off her head, for she insisted that she was not Miss Leighton, that she had never even heard of such a person, and that she was a Lady Torbeth or some name like that. What *was* she to do? I told her to do nothing—a sovereign slipped into her hand made my suggestions weighty—and to go and tell Miss Leighton that I was here.

May I never again have to be present at a scene like that which followed! Lady Torbeth came into the

drawing-room immediately. At my first glance I saw that it was Miss Leighton—yesterday's return of the viscountess to her old brain-house having been only a flying visit. She did not recognise her husband. To my mingled horror and delight she screamed and appealed to me for protection when Lord Torbeth in an agony of love and yearning sprang forward to embrace her. It was horrible to observe his sorrow; but it was also good to know that now he must at last completely exonerate me. This was the body, the voice, the brain of his wife—*but it was not she!*

That afternoon Freycinet mercifully was able to induce the wilful tenant to vacate Lady Torbeth's brain long enough to arrange with the viscountess "herself" for the operations which her husband now implored Yznaga to proceed with without a moment's delay. On the following day they began, and it was during the preliminary stages of her treatment that the final episode in my life's romance occurred. I had been entrusted with the monotonous but essential duty of suffusing her mind with every minute particle which I could recall of her "Gertrude Leighton" experience in order that the whole of that series of mental images might be permanently blotted out, and I was doing this gruesome work by telling her as graphically as I could the whole sad story while we two sat alone in the clinic.

Suddenly the thought of my own irreparable loss of her flamed up like a consuming passion not to be stayed nor denied. Apparently with no concurrence

of my will, I at once became conscious of a rapid transformation of myself into Templeton, and Lady Torbeth—as if likewise drawn by supersensual influences—began to emerge into Gertrude Leighton. For one delirious instant I felt a fiendish joy over this dizzying turn of the wheel of fate, and Gertrude also seemed to feel the suction of the pit, for she sprang to her feet and begged me to take her away—at once—forever!

My own lapse of personality was not total, however, and with a wild clutching at what remained to me of Croft I ran to the door and shouted.

Freycinet who was sitting just outside for the purpose of exerting a hypnotic influence, if required, was at my side in an instant, and with my quickly vanishing Croft-will I implored him to “suggest” to me that I was only Croft. He took in the situation with the eye of a man who has spent twenty years among the insane and the mentally abnormal. In another minute I was perfectly calm again, and from that hour to this Templeton only drops in to see me when I send him an urgent invitation, and then he stops only a moment or two.

As everybody knows, the operations on Lady Torbeth’s brain were even more successful than Yznaga had dared to hope. She has never so much as remembered in the vaguest way that she was ever tormented by either the voluptuous and passionate, or the morbid and religious personalities who at one time disputed the lease of her brain with the noble and lovable woman whom all her friends now know her to be.

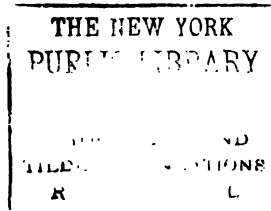
It was also my happy good fortune soon afterward to induce poor Lord Ackerby to lay the ghost of sensuality which had haunted the dreary corridors of his embittered and ruined life, by submitting to Yznaga's treatment. A sly hint from me while the operation was being performed brought about the introduction of powerful "suggestions," and now the good man is excessively fond of art and decorative schemes and fads of all kinds—in other words, he is now very fond of his wife, who can't imagine what has come over him.

Intent upon bringing about a reconciliation between the dean and his daughter, I made the foolish mistake of going to Dunchester, where I was arrested as a dangerous lunatic and subjected to examination as to my sanity. The truths which I was obliged to testify to led the commission, headed by the only Bompus, to pronounce me mad, and I was accordingly placed in an asylum, where I might have remained the rest of my life had not Lord Torbeth taken vigorous steps to have me set free. A writ of *habeas corpus* brought me into court, where my own and my counsel's statements impressed the judge sufficiently to move him to decree that I be once more examined, this time by a commission of eminent specialists, including Sir Porter Hope. Before this commission such men as Wolff and de Moulin and Steinmetz testified—and my triumphant discharge naturally followed, to the no little delectation of the man in the street and the public at large.

I am done. I have stated what science can accom-

plish for humanity. Let him who feels no struggle within himself of conflicting wills battling to the death; let him who does not behold in those about him, those whom he loves, the evidences of a like surging back and forth of warring personalities; let him who would not wish to see the stately temple of the human brain rid of all base and unfit tenants, to the intent that only fit and noble ones might dwell therein; let him who cares not that through an ancient forgery man thinks his brain-home mortgaged to a tortured and torturing ghost, the non-existent Self—let such an one, I say, toss this odd book into the fire, and think no more about it.

But let the rest think new and more generous and loftier thoughts of man, his character, his sins, his weaknesses, and his so-called moral responsibility.



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